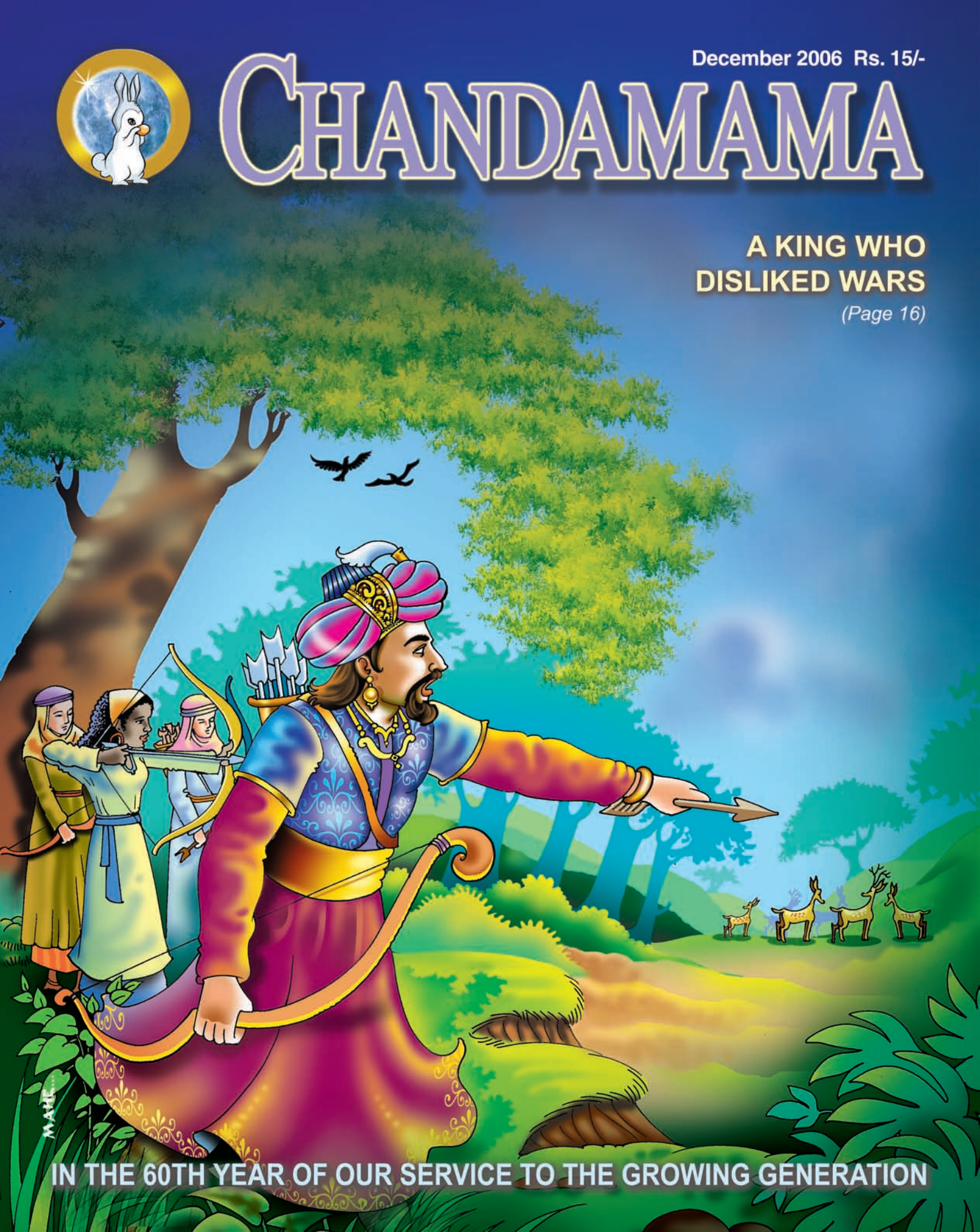
December 2006 Rs. 15/-

CHANDAMAMA

A KING WHO DISLIKED WARS

(Page 16)

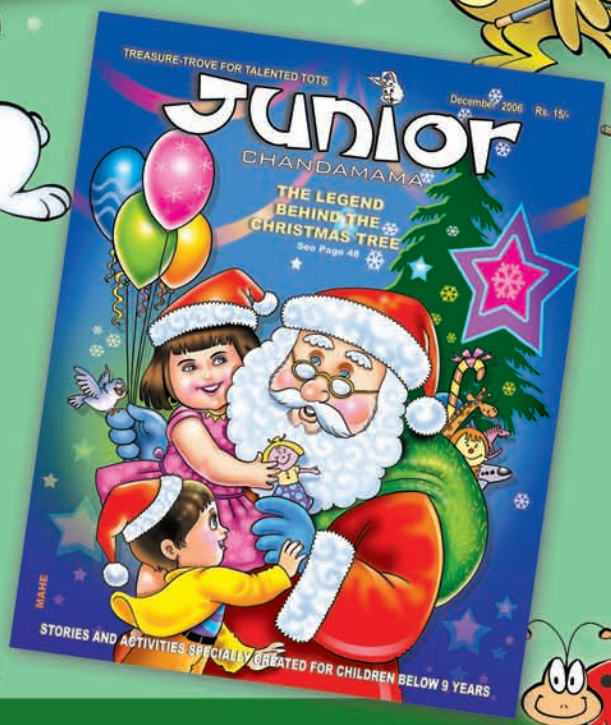


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TEST YOUR IQ

- Which type of mosquitoes eat other mosquitoes?
- A 11th century temple has no deity, no idol, no worship! Where is it located?
- A temple archway has the tales from the Panchatantra sculpted on it. Where will you go to see them?
- Which dog lived the longest in history?
- Who or which will you associate with when you are told about Fragania?
- Someone cut off his right hand with his left hand and went for his last battle (against the British army). Who was it?
- Where is Asia's largest Rose Garden located?
- What is the difference between Julemanden and Joulupukki?

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UNSHEATHE YOUR SWORD TO FIGHT THE DEMONS OF CHIKUNGUNYA AND DENGUE



Did you know that mosquitoes have names?

Meet AEDES* mosquitoes–they cause the two crippling diseases which have been maiming children, and women and men–young and old alike.

**Aedes aegypti - the mosquito species that transmit the virus.*

THIS IS A FIGHT TO 'DEFEND' YOURSELF!



1. Observe this dress code: Wear full-sleeved clothes ; don't expose your body.
2. Apply a thin layer of any mosquito repellent on any exposed part.
3. Sleep under mosquito-nets.
4. If you have an aquarium, change the water at least once in two or three days.
5. Remember to cover water tanks, and water stored in vessels.
6. Do not keep drinking water in the fridge for more than two days; fill them with fresh water.
7. Keep your study room/workplace neat and clean. Mosquitoes breed where there is junk.

Issued by your magazine in the interests of the health of children in India.

MAHE

VOL. 37 DECEMBER 2006 NO. 12



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(Vikram and Vetala)



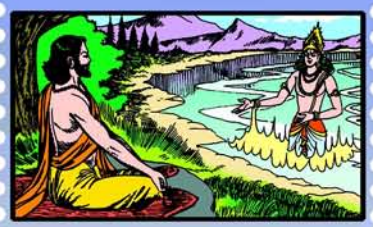
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PROTECT ENVIRONMENT: ACT NOW

First it was chikungunya. From stray cases, it slowly spread to reach epidemic proportions. Then came yet another crippling disease called dengue, a viral fever, which was also not confined to one region. For nearly six months from last May-June, these two diseases were 'talking points', with discussions around possible treatment and prevention. We were told that the name chikungunya came from a tree in African countries which goes dry or assumes a bend. The victims reach a stage when they will be unable to walk straight, and take a long time, even after sustained treatment, to become normal. Similarly, dengue was wrongly called Japanese fever. After reading through research findings, and investigations in India, the origin of the two diseases was pinpointed to a mosquito-bite! The villain was identified as *aedes aegypti* capable of spreading a virus causing both diseases. Strangely, this mosquito is found to be more active during the day than at night. By now, the spread of the diseases has been checked, and people are being advised on methods of prevention. A two-pronged strategy is being promoted: to annihilate the existing mosquito population and to deny them facilities to breed.

Ultimately, it has boiled down to the discovery that we ourselves are the culprits – by keeping our immediate surroundings unclean, collecting junk all over our houses, and allowing putrefication of garbage.

We are familiar with the sight of modern cities existing side by side with slums where there is no proper drainage; there is stagnation of water. That 'prevention is better than cure' remains a proverb in text-books, while we search for an easy scapegoat–'government'! Who is this government? They are none other than our elected representatives, some of whom may even be our neighbours.

Let all of us remember *our duty*: keep our environment clean. We should know that cleanliness reflects not only the character of the residents but the health of the community.

Today learned men everywhere take the best from small and large books, like a bee from flowers. ***- Kapila***

Smaller than the small, greater than the great, the self is set in the heart of every creature. ***- Kathopanishad***

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter.
- Keats

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Reader Dipankar Dutta, New Delhi, has this to say :

For the last three years, I have not missed even a single issue. I am highly impressed by its wide collection of stories and articles on science. I devour the content like a knowlege-hungry child. I am greatly touched by the folktales and stories from mythology of the bygone era.

This came from Saisuman Pahan, Balasore :

Chandamama has been my favourite magazine from my childhood. I have not missed any issues. "Science Fair" is the best feature. I like to read the Arabian Nights comics. The stories in the magazine are not only interesting but informative. Congratulations on completing 60 years.

By e-mail from reader Sesikala, Visakhapatnam :

Chandamama is well-loved by kids and adults alike. The magazine's language is of a good standard, despite 'printer's devil, like growse instead of grouse (November issue).

Reader K.Ravi Shankara Bhat writes from Bangalore:

I like all the stories in *Chandamama*. The Garuda comics is shaping well. I also like News Flash, Science Fair, and other knowledge-giving articles.

This came from Soibam Sonali of Imphal, Manipur :

I am a new reader of *Chandamama*. It is very informative and interesting. The magazine is of great value for the growing generation. I have gained more knowledge after I started reading *Chandamama*. The stories are quite interesting and help me to spend my leisure hours usefully. The stories invariably have great morals. I really liked the folktale from Orissa "The Seven Sisters-in-law". I am keenly looking forward to seeing the next issues.

Ms. Pavithra Srinivasan, Editor, Katha, Chennai, writes :

The reviews (of Katha books) are insightful and elaborate. I deeply appreciate them. I am sure *Chandamama* will continue to publish excellent stories and articles as it does now.

NEW TALES OF KING VIKRAM AND THE VETALA

DOUBLE TROUBLE

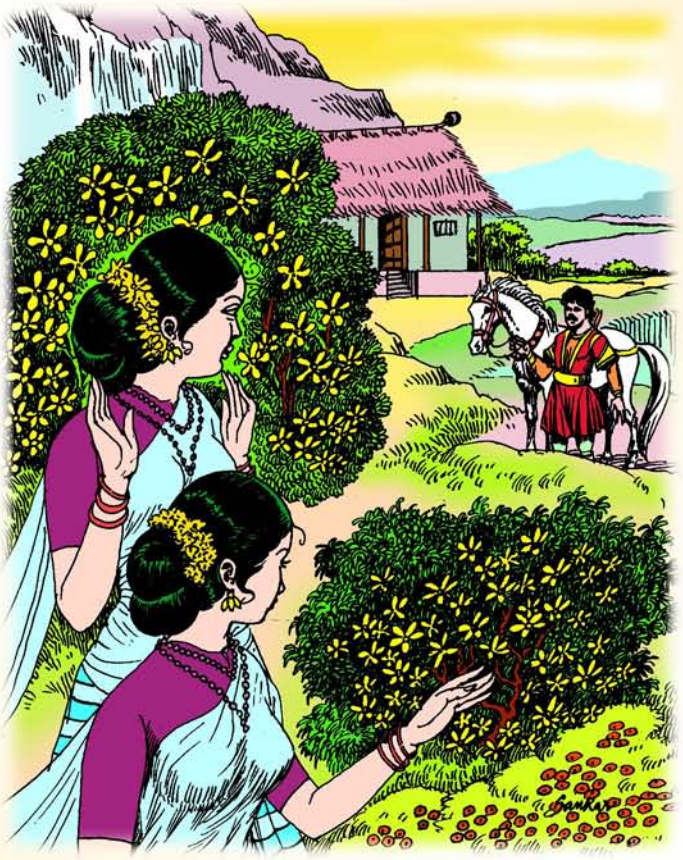


The cremation ground presented an eerie spectacle on that dark night. The moon was hidden behind the clouds, and it was drizzling intermittently. The pitch darkness was relieved only by occasional flashes of lightning that lit up the sombre scene, causing an eerie dance of jerky shadows in the cremation ground. Occasionally, a jackal's spine-chilling howl or the blood-curdling laughter of some invisible evil spirit cut into the silence that hung like a shroud over the area. Altogether, it was a scene that would strike terror into the bravest heart. But nothing could daunt the intrepid King Vikram. Once again, he made his way to the gnarled tree from which the ancient corpse was hanging. Bones crunched under his feet, and a screeching ghost rose from the dust in shuddering frenzy as he marched determinedly ahead.

Oblivious to everything but the mission at hand, he brought the hanging corpse down by cutting the rope with his sword. Slinging it astride his shoulder, he had just begun his return journey when the vampire that possessed the corpse said, "O King! Braving the dangers of this cremation ground, you have been working relentlessly to achieve your goal. But I doubt whether you will be able to achieve it. Further, even if you do get what you wish for, will you be lucky enough to enjoy it, or will you end up squandering the fruits of your triumph? This was what happened with Jayant, a prince who set out on a mission, only to abandon it when success was within his grasp! Listen to his story."

The tale the vampire narrated was as follows.

Prince Jayant, heir to the throne of Chandragiri, had attained marriageable age. When the king and queen let it be known that they were looking for a suitable bride



for their son, marriage proposals from royal families poured in. The queen showed him the portraits of several princesses which she had received, and asked him to make his choice. However, Jayant did not like any of them. Soon, he was fed up of the whole exercise. Suddenly an idea struck him – 'Why should I agree to having a bride chosen for me? I shall go out into the world and find a girl whom I like, and marry her!'

The idea filled him with excitement. Without telling anyone of his plan, he swiftly saddled his horse and rode out of the palace. Before long, he had left the capital far behind him and was in the countryside.

After riding aimlessly for a few hours, Jayant came to a picturesque wooded valley. The scenic beauty of the place urged him to stop and explore it. He had just dismounted when his attention was drawn to two young women who were plucking flowers from the bushes a few yards away. Their beauty took his breath away.

After watching them from afar for a few moments, Jayant could no longer restrain his curiosity. He approached them and asked, "Ladies, may I know who you are and what you're doing in this lonely wood? You're so beautiful that you look hardly human. Are you celestial nymphs?"

The girls giggled. One of them answered, "We're as human as you are. We're twin sisters Shweta and Shyama, daughters of the renowned astrologer Pandit Narayan. Our father loves this valley and has a hut here which he often uses as a retreat. We had come down here for a family holiday, when Father was invited by the neighbouring king for consultation. So he has gone there, leaving us behind."

The prince said, "Permit me to introduce myself. I'm Jayant, the crown-prince of Chandragiri. My parents want me to get married, but I didn't like any of the girls they found for me. I left home in search of a suitable bride of my own choice. Now that I have seen you, I think I need look no farther. I would like to marry one of you. I want to discuss the matter with your father. When does he return from his visit?"

"As a matter of fact, he's expected tomorrow morning," answered the girl who had spoken earlier.

Now, the other girl spoke up: "But before you proceed further, there's something you need to know. Our father is an astrologer whose predictions seldom go wrong. After examining our horoscopes, he has predicted that both of us are destined to marry one man."

"That's not a problem," said Jayant enthusiastically. "You needn't fear that I shall cause your father's prophesy to go wrong. I have no objection to marrying both of you – if that's what you all wish!"

The first girl asked, "What do you know about us, O Prince?"

"I don't know anything as yet," shot back Jayant, "but I'm ready to learn – whatever you tell me!"

The girls exchanged glances. The second said, "Both of us are very obstinate by nature. We would do anything to get our own way. Also, despite being devoted to each other, we are also fiercely competitive by nature." She paused and looked at her sister.

The latter now spoke up: "One thing we're both very particular about is that the man we marry must be very intelligent. If you don't mind, we'd like to test you."

This challenge appealed to the prince's sporting nature. "By all means!" he said.

"Well, then," she went on, "we've already told you that our names are Shweta and Shyama. But which of us is Shweta, and which Shyama? Can you answer that, O Prince?"

For a moment, the prince remained silent, studying their faces intently. Then, with a smile, he told the girl who had asked the question, "Evidently, you have been named on the basis of your complexion. Now, *you* are of a slightly dusky complexion, compared to your sister – so, you are Shyama. She is fairer than you; hence, she must be Shweta. Am I right?"

The girl beamed and nodded. "Yes, you are. I must compliment you," she said.

It was now Shweta's turn to pose a question. "Can you find out which of us is the older twin, and which the younger?"

Jayant replied, "I can't tell you that immediately. But if you give me a couple of hours' time, I shall give you the answer."

The girls agreed. Meanwhile, as it was lunch time, they invited him to their hut. Quickly, they prepared a delicious repast and served him.

"Thank you for a most tasty feast!" said the prince as he washed his hands after the meal.

Seating himself on the chair offered, he turned to Shweta and said, "And now, I have the answer to your question. You are the older twin."

"Right! But how could you guess?" asked Shweta in admiration.

The prince explained, "Generally, it is the older sister who cooks the food, while the younger helps her in cooking and in serving the food. I observed that you did all the cooking, while Shyama did the serving. That's how I came to this conclusion."

"You're intelligent indeed!" said Shyama. "And now, there's one more thing I want to ask you. According to our horoscopes, both my sister and I are destined to give birth to our children on the same day. But my child will be born a few minutes before Shweta's. In such a scenario, which of the children would you designate as your heir?"

The prince said, "I need some time to think it over





Vitamin C is a water-soluble vitamin and is easily destroyed by heat, light, air and oxidation; therefore it is also easily lost in cooking water. When cooking with copper or iron utensils, there is an even greater loss if alkalis such as baking powder or soda is used.

before answering. I would now like to take your leave. I shall come and meet your father tomorrow." He then bowed to the girls and departed.

The next morning, Pandit Narayan returned from his visit. The girls told him all about the prince's visit.

However, evening brought not the prince as expected, but a royal messenger, bearing a letter from the prince to the girls that read: "After thinking over the matter, I have come to the conclusion that I cannot marry you, after all. Pardon me for not keeping my word to you. Next week, I shall be getting married to Princess Pushpa of Suryapur, the bride chosen by my parents."

Concluding the story at this point, the vampire demanded, "O King, why did Jayant – who had earlier been hell-bent on choosing a bride himself without parental interference – suddenly change his mind, and opt for a traditionally arranged marriage? Perhaps, he had originally been smitten by the girls' beauty, but on subsequent reflection realised that they were commoners, and as such, unsuitable! But if he was determined to marry only a girl of royal blood, why did he embark on this exercise at all? Wasn't it the height of callousness on his part to back out after having virtually promised marriage to the two innocent girls? If you know the answer, speak out. Otherwise, your head shall shatter into smithereens!"

Without hesitation, King Vikram answered, "It's true that Jayant was initially smitten by the girls' beauty and he subsequently rejected them in a rather callous manner. But this was not because they were commoners, but for another reason. By their own admission, they were obstinate and competitive. On reflection, he realised that these traits in them, if he made them his queens, would cause havoc to the kingdom. Each would insist on her own son being nominated the heir-apparent. This, in turn, would not only cause strife within the family but weaken the kingdom. Hence, he wisely decided not to marry either or both of them!"

On hearing this, the vampire nodded in approval, before going off into peal after peal of thunderous laughter. The next moment he, along with the corpse, moved off the king's shoulder with a jerk and flew back to the tree. King Vikram gave a little sigh as he gazed upon the scene. Then, he squared his shoulders and retraced his steps towards the tree.



Indiascope



BULLOCKS AND MUSIC

Inside the impregnable Gwalior fort is the palace Man Mandir built by the Tomar ruler Man Singh(1486-1516). He had designed it in such a way that he could listen to music even from the corridors, as music was his greatest aspiration. It was music that brought him and the tribal girl Mriganayani closer. He met her for the first time under strange circumstances. As he was returning from a hunting expedition, the elephant he was riding could not move forward as two fighting buffaloes blocked his way. Suddenly, some village belles appeared. They, too, stood aghast, but one of them bravely went forward and separated the bulls! She was Mriganayini. Man Singh invited her to his palace where, on subsequent days, he would be enchanted by her music. He wished to marry her, but he could not as she belonged to a tribe called Gujars. However, he built for her a separate palace calling it Gujari Mahal. At present, it is an Archaeological Museum.

MORE THAN A FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



People generally believe that Diwali commemorates the return of Rama to Ayodhya at the end of a 14-year exile after his victory over Ravana, marking the advent of 'Ramarjaya'. A historical victory is remembered on this day when King Vikramaditya of the Gupta dynasty, returned to his capital Ujjain after defeating the Huns who had invaded India in A.D. 530. For the followers of Jainism, it was on Diwali day the founder of the religion, Lord Mahavira, attained Nirvana. Again, it was on Diwali day the sixth Sikh Guru Har Govind reached Amritsar after being released by the Mughal Emperor Jehangir. To commemorate the occasion, the Golden Temple is illuminated on Diwali. The Arya Samajists have a special significance for the day, as it was on Diwali that the founder, Swami Dayanand Saraswathi, ended his earthly existence by drinking poisoned milk offered to him by his religious rivals. Thus, Diwali is more than a "festival of lights".

From the pen of
RUSKIN BOND

WAITING

Whenever there was an emergency, it so happened that Grandfather was in his bath. He was in his bath when a wild elephant smashed its way through the garden, trampling Grandmother's prize roses and sweet peas and bringing down the garden wall.

He was in his bath when the roof of the house blew away in a cyclone.

He was in his bath when a visiting aunt went into hysterics because there was a baby python curled up on her dressing-table.

On all these occasions he expressed surprise that anything could have happened during the twenty minutes he was in his bath-tub; by the time he got dressed, everything was over: the wild elephant had gone trumpeting on its way, the cyclonic storm had passed, and the baby python had been removed by young master Rakesh who had put it there in the first place.



Grandfather's bath consisted of an old-fashioned tin tub filled with several buckets of hot water to which he added sprigs of mint. A mint bath! No one had ever heard of a mint bath, but Grandfather said it was most refreshing.

Grandfather sang in his bath and splashed around a lot, which is probably why he seldom knew what was going on elsewhere in the house.

He was in his bath when they felt the first shock of the great earthquake that was to reduce most of the town to a rubble.

The family was living in Shillong, a busy little town in the Cherrapunji Hills, where Grandfather Burman had retired from the Forest Service. He had bought a large old house on the outskirts of the town, a house so large and so old that a major part of his pension was used up in repairing it every now and then. Grandmother Burman just about managed to make both ends meet. There were no servants except for Mumtaz the cook, who had been with the family since Grandfather's Forest Service days; he had four small children of his own.

The Burmans' grandchildren lived with them. Rakesh, 11 years, rode off to school on his bicycle every morning. Mukesh, six, refused to go to school until he was seven. Dolly, three, followed Grandmother about the house and garden, helping her feed the chickens and the dog (which was a half dachshund, half spaniel and was called Pickle) and a goat that Grandfather insisted would provide them with milk some day—only, so far it had not.

The children's mother had died when Dolly was born; and their father, Mr. Burman, worked on a tea estate a few hundred miles away where there were no schools. So the children stayed with Mr.

TO HAPPEN

Burman's parents, who wouldn't have parted with them for anything in the world.

Every year there were earth tremors in this part of India, but there had not been a really big earthquake for thirty years.

"What do you do when there's an earthquake?" asked Rakesh, who had heard all about the last one.

"There isn't time to do much," said Grandfather. "Everyone just rushes out of doors."

"I'll stay in my bed until it's all over," said Rakesh.

"I'll get *under* my bed," said Mukesh. "It can't find me there!"

"It's best to stand in a doorway," said Grandmother. "If you look at earthquake pictures, you'll notice that the door frames are always left standing!"



Although Shillong was in a region where earthquakes sometimes happened, the family preferred to live there. There was a lake and a colourful bazaar, and Grandmother's garden was full of butterflies, birds and exotic orchids, as well as fruit trees and trees that were fun to climb. Rakesh liked roaming around the town on his bicycle. Mukesh enjoyed the sweet shops in the bazaar—when he was not wrestling with Mumtaz's two boys. Dolly kept herself busy building her own doll's house under the staircase.

Life moved at a gentle pace in Shillong. Apart from the elephant that strayed into the garden, nothing very exciting had happened recently to the family. The highlight of the year had been Rakesh's winning the high jump in his school sports, for which he had won a small cup—so small that he had given it to Dolly to add to her doll's house.

Then one morning, while Grandfather was in his bath, the town seemed suddenly very still and very quiet….

(To continue...)



DID YOU KNOW?

A cat sees about six times better than a human at night because of the tapetum lucidum, a layer of extra reflecting cells which absorb light.

SCIENCE FAIR

- By Rosscote Krishna Pillai

XMAS-BORN: ISAAC NEWTON



Isaac Newton, universally acclaimed as the world's greatest-ever scientist, was born on December 25, 1642 (according to the Julian calendar, but on January 4, 1643 as per the prevailing Gregorian) in Lincolnshire in England. His father, Isaac Newton, a wealthy farmer, died two months before the son's birth. His mother remarried and Isaac had an unhappy childhood. He was sent to the Free Grammar School in Grantham. On his completing education there, in 1661, he was admitted to the Trinity College, Cambridge. He graduated in 1665. With the outbreak of plague in England in 1665, the University was closed and Newton was soon back home.

But that year became the most productive period of his life. He made some of his most outstanding contributions to science. He invented a new form of mathematics, calculus, and worked out the binomial theorem. His work in optics, using glass prisms, led to his finding that white light is a combination of several different colours and also that light consists of corpuscles or minute particles.

Seeing an apple fall from a tree in his farm made him think about the force of gravitation, and concluded that the same force governed the motion of the Moon and the fall of the apple. Ultimately it led to his general theory of gravitation. It stated that every particle of matter attracts every other particle and that the attraction varied as the product of their masses and inversely as the square of the distance between them. He identified gravitation as the fundamental force controlling the motions of celestial bodies and that the law of gravitation was at work in the universe.

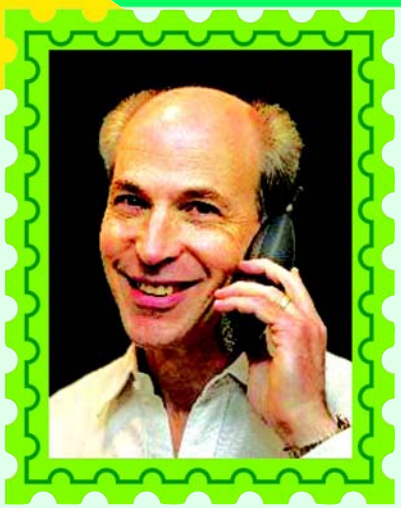
His researches on mechanics led to the three laws of motion: (1) A body at rest or in uniform motion will continue in that state unless a force is applied; (2) The applied force equals the rate of change of momentum of the body; and (3) If a body exerts a force on another body, there is an equal but opposite force on the first body.

Newton returned to his college in 1667. He got his Master's degree two years later. When he was only 27, he was made the Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in Cambridge University. There he worked on the behaviour of light and published his results in 1704 in a treatise called the Opticks. His book *Principia* in short, detailing his findings, published first in Latin in 1687, is renowned as the greatest scientific book ever written.

Newton was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (F.R.S.) in1671 when he was 29. In 1703, he was elected President of the Royal Society, which post he held till his death, and elected a Member of Parliament in 1689. He was knighted in 1705, the first scientist to be honoured thus for his work.

A bachelor, he remained wedded to science. He died on March 20, 1727 at the age of 85 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, where the bodies of many of UK's famous men had been interred.

GENETIC COPYING PROCESS DISCOVERED



Dr.Roger D.Kornberg of Stanford University, USA, won this year's Nobel Prize in chemistry for his discovery of the mechanism by which the information stored in the genes is copied from DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) in the nucleus of an organism's cells into what is called messenger RNA (mRNA – ribonucleic acid) and then transferred to the outer parts of the cells that produce proteins . It is actually the proteins that build the organism and enable its functions. This copying and transferring process or mechanism is called transcription. Dr.Kornberg analysed and studied this process in the important group of organisms called eukaryotes, which consists of all higher animals including mammals and plants as well as ordinary yeast. Their cells have well-defined nucleii. Dr. Kornberg was the first to create detailed crystallographic pictures of the arrangement of the several thousands of atoms in each molecule of the machinery.

Diseases such as cancer, heart ailments and several kinds of inflammation are connnected with disturbances in the transcription process. If the process is interrupted, thereby stopping protein production, the organism will die. So this discovery has fundamental importance in medicine.

His father, Dr. Arthur Kornberg, had received the Nobel Prize in medicine/physiology in 1959– a rare instance of both a father and son becoming Nobel laureates.

NEWTONSPEAK

"I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself, I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself now and then in finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay undiscovered before me."

From a letter to Robert Hooke, scientist, 1676:

"If I have seen further than other men, it is because I stood on the shoulders of giants."

SCIENCE QUIZ



1. What is the branch of science dealing with the study of liquids at rest known as?
   a. Hydrolysis; b. Hydrography; c. Hydrology; d. Hydrostatics
2. What is a cicada?
   a. a plant; b. a worm; c. an insect; d. a mammal
3. Who discovered the phenomenon of chain reaction?
   a. J. Oppenheimer; b. Albert Einstein; c. Niels Bohr; d. Otto Hahn
4. Which gas causes 'green house effect'?
   a. Carbon monoxide; b. Carbon dioxide; c. Nitrogen; d. Ozone.

ANSWER: 1. d. Hydrostatics, 2. c. an insect, 3. d. Otto Hahn in 1938-39, 4. b. Carbon dioxide (and not Carbon monoxide–as given in the October 2006 issue).

A PAGE FROM INDIAN HISTORY

A KING WHO

Mahmud Khalji was succeeded by his eldest son, Ghyas-ud-din, who had remained his father's able assistant and right hand throughout his reign. It was, therefore, only natural that he became the next king after Mahmud's death. But he had already spent so much of his time in battlefields with his father that he had no wish to fight any more battles after he was crowned.

"What does your majesty propose to do?" asked his advisors and ministers, surprised. "Who will look after the kingdom?"

"Nasir, my eldest son. I shall proclaim him heir-apparent and he can take over my duties as king."

"Sire, I do not think it would be a wise thing to do," said his chief advisor shaking his head, "you're too young to hand over your duties and Prince Nasir isn't quite steady enough to become the king."

"Oh he'll learn to be responsible once he knows that he is to succeed me," said Ghyas-ud-din. "In any case, I plan to take things easy from now on. I think I've fought quite enough." And that was that.

No one was able to make him change his mind. He never touched the sword again.

Ghyas-ud-din was devoted to religious rituals and never missed his prayers. He even woke up at midnight to pray. In fact, he ordered his attendants to throw him out of bed if he was deeply asleep and refused to get up. Crooks often took advantage of his fanaticism and duped him shamelessly. One day a man came to him with a handful of wheat. When Ghyas-ud-din asked him what he wanted, he told him that he had recited the entire Koran over each of the grains in his hand. Ghyas-ud-din took the grains and paid him a huge sum of money for having done something so pious.

Another day a different man turned up with the hoof of an ass. He claimed that it belonged to the ass that had carried Lord Jesus to Jerusalem. Ghyas-ud-din took the hoof and paid the man fifty thousand rupees. Three other men turned up the very next week carrying three more hoofs and repeated the same story. Again Ghyas-ud-din paid the same amount of money to all three. The next morning yet another man turned up with another hoof, claiming that it belonged to the ass that had carried Lord Jesus. The courtiers who had been watching it all in silent anger could not keep quiet any longer. "Sire," cried one of the angry courtiers, "the ass that carried the Messiah could not have possibly have had five hoofs! Such a thing is impossible! This man must be lying."



"Perhaps," said Ghyas-ud-din unperturbed, "but I cannot be sure which one of them is telling a lie. It might not be this man. So let him have his reward."

DISLIKED WARS



Ghyas-ud-din never touched wine or any other intoxicant. There are many amusing stories in the *Wakiat-i-Mushtaki* about this. Once, when Ghyas-ud-din fell ill, the royal physician made up a special medicine for him. But the king absolutely refused to touch it unless the physician told him the names of every single ingredient used. There were 300 and the physician was made to read out the entire list. The ingredients also included a few poppy seeds. Ghyas-ud-din ordered the medicine to be thrown away right in front of his eyes. "But the ingredients cost me nearly a lakh of rupees," cried the royal physician.

"That cannot be helped," said Ghyas-ud-din. "I cannot forsake my principle for the sake of money."

"Then please allow me to give it to other sick people who cannot afford it otherwise," pleaded the physician.

"Never!" cried Ghyas-ud-din. "What the king cannot have is not to be given to another living soul!"

Ghyas-ud-din was said to have great affection for birds, animals and all 'dumb creatures'. One day he discovered a mouse in his bedroom. But, instead of getting angry or ordering it to be killed, he told the attendants to take it away and feed it regularly. He treated the pigeons and parrots who strayed into the palace the same way.

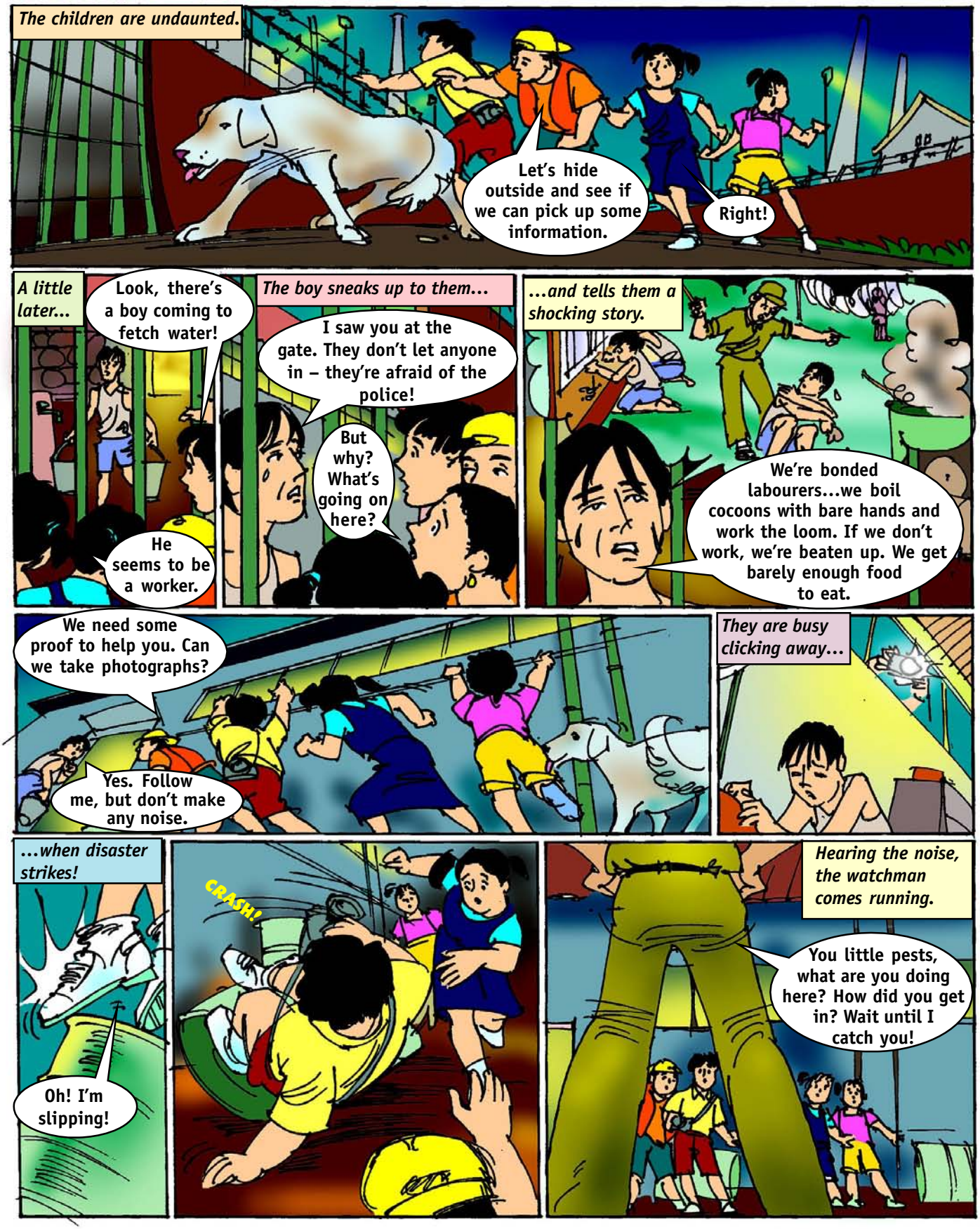
Ghyas-ud-din had yet another peculiar trait. All biographers agree that he had great faith in women's ability to do practically everything a man could do. He had thousands of women "in his service". Within the fort city of Mandu he created a separate world for them where they learnt to do all kinds of work. This is how historian Firishta describes it: "Among them (women) were school teachers, musicians, dancers, embroiderers, women to read prayers and women of all trades and professions. Five hundred young Turkish girls in uniform, armed with bows and arrows which they could use, stood on his right. On his left stood five hundred Abyssinian girls with fire arms."

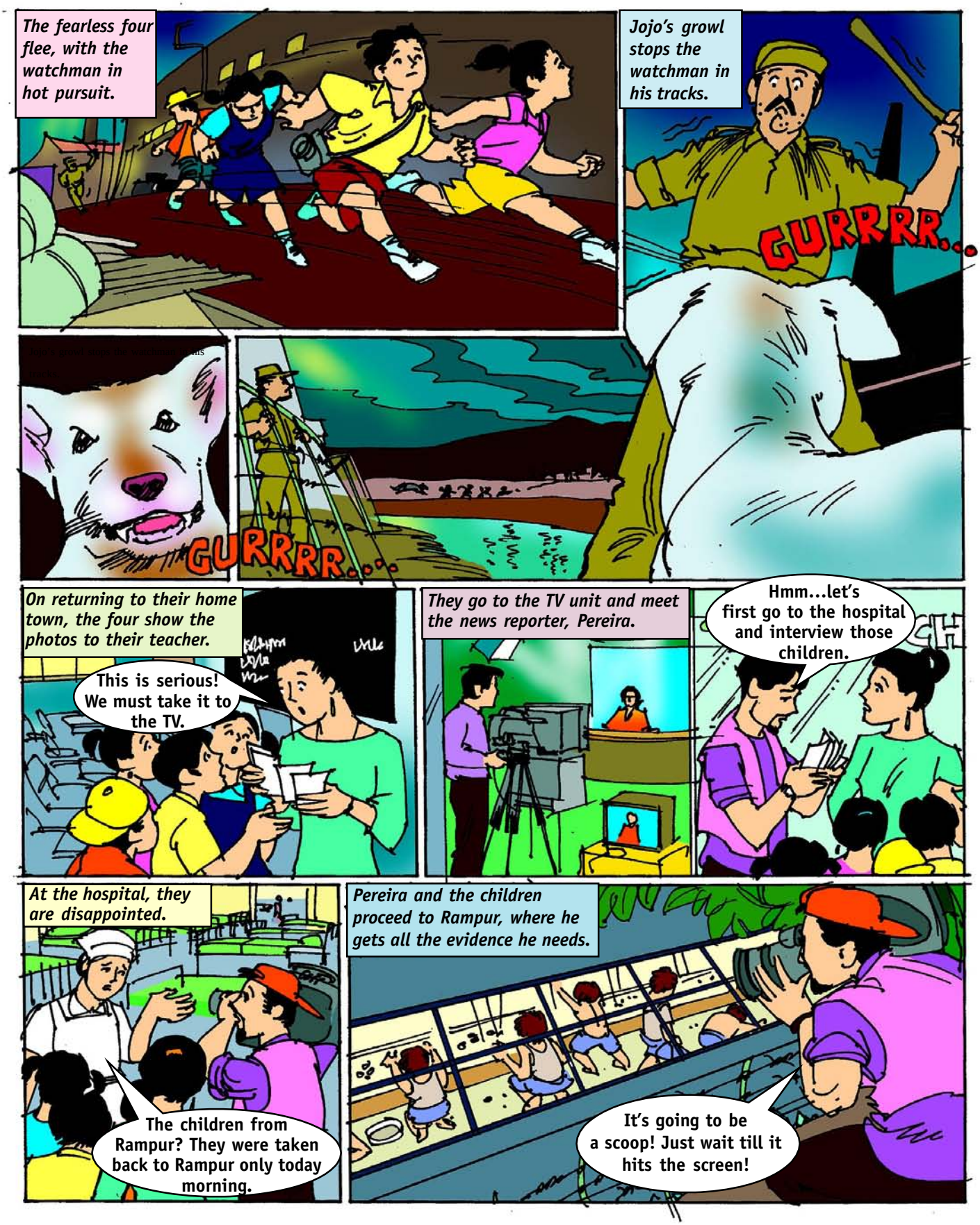
We also get to know more about this from the *Memoirs of Jehangir*: "He (Ghyas-ud-din) had a whole city of women and had it made up of all kinds–soldiers, magistrates, qazis, kotwals and whoever else is necessary for the administration of a town. He taught women all kinds of arts and crafts and also hunting and took many of them along when he went to hunt deer."

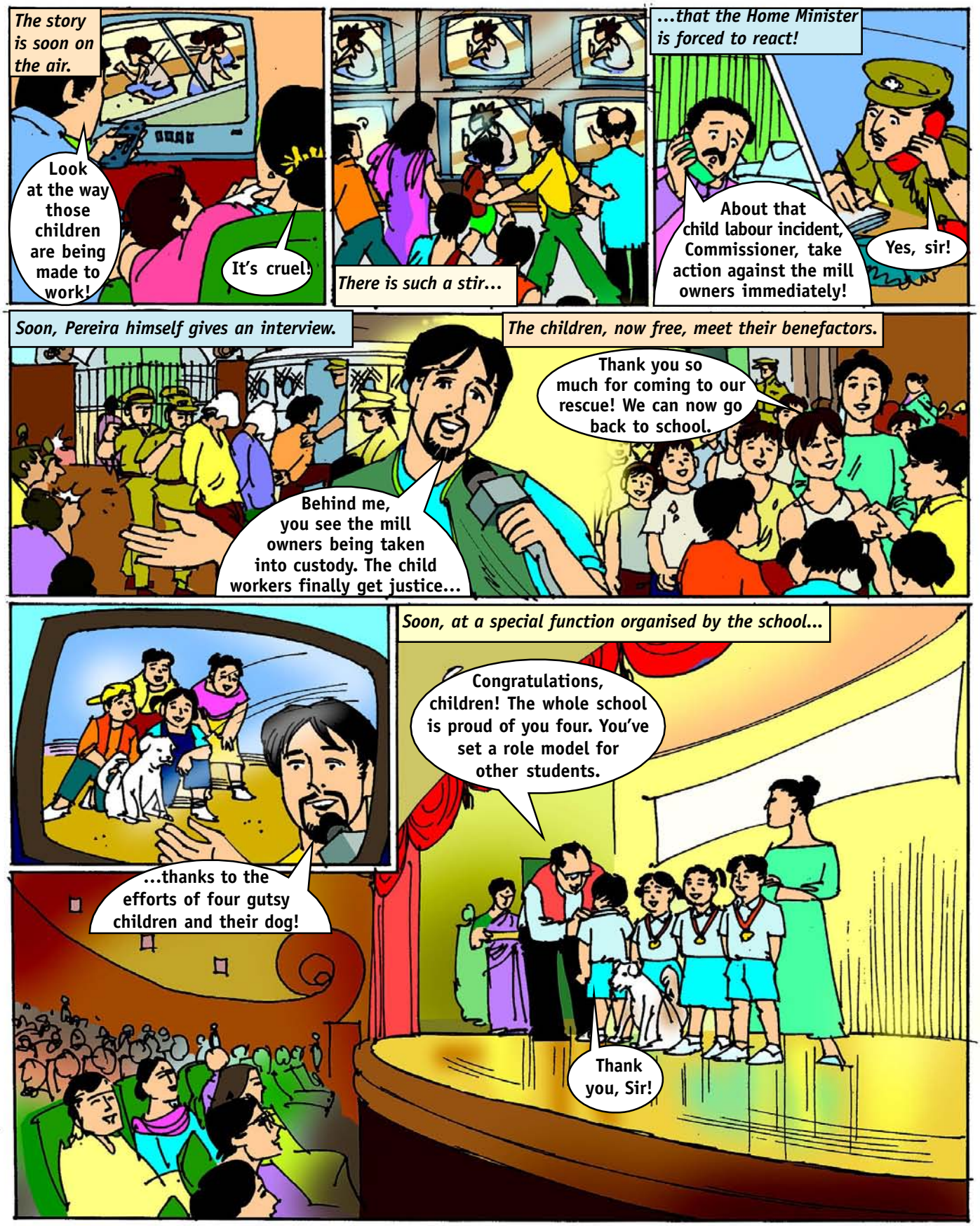
Ghyas-ud-din stayed in Mandu throughout his long reign. He had the same love of beauty as his father and built several monuments. Of these the most famous is the Jahaz Mahal. Built between two tanks, the Munja Talao and Karpur Talao, the building reminded people of a ship. Hence the name. The Hindola Mahal was also made around this time. Ghyas-ud-din built both for the ladies in his palace. They are an artist's dream even now.

-Swapna Dutta


The Fearless Four
BONDED CHILD LABOUR FREED
Mithun and his friends are visiting the children's ward at the local General Hospital.
HOSPITAL
Our latest class project looks interesting.
They see a number of children with identical infection – discoloured hands and peeling skin.
Where are you from? How did you get this infection?
But the boy does not reply.
My goodness! Your hands must be paining badly.
Someone brought them. He didn't give any details, except that they work in a silk mill in Rampur.
The ward nurse tells them what she knows about the children.
Outside, the friends discuss the matter.
The kids seem afraid to speak.
Something is wrong here. We must investigate.
Let's go to Rampur! My grandparents live there.
Soon, they are at Rampur.
Come on, everybody! Meet my grandpa and grandma.
Welcome, children! We're so glad to have you all here.
Soon, they are out exploring...
The silk mill? There it is, in the distance.
They are rudely stopped at the gates.
No visitors. Go away, if you don't want a beating!
SILK MILL
See! A truck-load of children being taken into the mill!...


The children are undaunted.
Let's hide outside and see if we can pick up some information.
Right!
A little later...
Look, there's a boy coming to fetch water!
He seems to be a worker.
The boy sneaks up to them...
I saw you at the gate. They don't let anyone in – they're afraid of the police!
But why? What's going on here?
...and tells them a shocking story.
We're bonded labourers...we boil cocoons with bare hands and work the loom. If we don't work, we're beaten up. We get barely enough food to eat.
We need some proof to help you. Can we take photographs?
Yes. Follow me, but don't make any noise.
They are busy clicking away...
...when disaster strikes!
Oh! I'm slipping!
CRASH!
Hearing the noise, the watchman comes running.
You little pests, what are you doing here? How did you get in? Wait until I catch you!


The fearless four flee, with the watchman in hot pursuit.
Jojo's growl stops the watchman in his tracks.
GURRRR...
GURRRR...
On returning to their home town, the four show the photos to their teacher.
This is serious! We must take it to the TV.
They go to the TV unit and meet the news reporter, Pereira.
Hmm...let's first go to the hospital and interview those children.
At the hospital, they are disappointed.
The children from Rampur? They were taken back to Rampur only today morning.
Pereira and the children proceed to Rampur, where he gets all the evidence he needs.
It's going to be a scoop! Just wait till it hits the screen!


The story is soon on the air.
Look at the way those children are being made to work!
It's cruel!
There is such a stir...
...that the Home Minister is forced to react!
About that child labour incident, Commissioner, take action against the mill owners immediately!
Yes, sir!
Soon, Pereira himself gives an interview.
Behind me, you see the mill owners being taken into custody. The child workers finally get justice...
The children, now free, meet their benefactors.
Thank you so much for coming to our rescue! We can now go back to school.
...thanks to the efforts of four gutsy children and their dog!
Soon, at a special function organised by the school...
Congratulations, children! The whole school is proud of you four. You've set a role model for other students.
Thank you, Sir!



DISCIPLINE

While Brahmadutta ruled Banaras, Bodhisattva was born as a Master Sculptor at Takshasila. Princes from far-off countries went to him to learn the art of sculpting from him.

The king received several reports of the Master and decided to send his own son to study the art under him.

None of the ministers and other courtiers liked this idea. The prince was hardly sixteen. How could he live alone at far-off Takshasila, serve the Master, and learn art? "O King," they said, "don't we have enough sculptors in our own kingdom? Why should the prince undergo an ordeal?"

But the king did not agree with them. In the kingdom, the boy was a prince and as such he would never learn anything properly. At Takshasila he would be an ordinary person; he would serve his teacher and learn things under discipline.

The prince was given only a pair of thin slippers and an umbrella. He was asked to carry a bag of one thousand silver pieces. "Walk all the way to Takshasila," the king told his son, "pay the Master the thousand pieces of silver, obey him and learn the art from him, and come back after your education is complete."

The prince had a hard time carrying the bag, walking the long distance, resting under trees, sleeping on hard ground, eating whatever he could get, and having no one to look after him. He finally reached Takshasila and went to the Master, told him the purpose of his coming, handed him the money, and joined as a pupil. The boy was very sharp and quick in learning, and the Master was satisfied.

The Master and his pupil used to go to the river every morning for a bath. One day, as they were having their bath, an old woman came there with a basket of groundnuts. She washed them and spread them on a cloth. The prince saw this, finished his bath in a hurry and came out of the river. When he thought the old woman was not looking, he grabbed a handful of nuts and put them into his mouth. The old woman noticed everything but said nothing.

The next day the same thing happened. The old woman ignored it again. But, when the boy

JATAKA KATHA

repeated the offence on the third day also, she got very angry. "Good sir," she told the Master, "your pupil has been stealing my groundnuts every day. I do not mind the loss much. But this boy is a thief and a real blot on your great reputation. Punish him so that he will stop thieving in future."

On reaching home, the Master ordered his other pupils to hold the prince by his hands and gave him three strokes on his back with a cane. "I punished you," he told the prince, "because you did something bad. Don't you ever do it again!"

The prince was in a terrible rage, but he could do nothing. Though he was a prince in Banaras, he was a common man here. Also, the Master had the right to punish his pupils.

'When I become king,' he swore to himself, 'I shall get him to Banaras on some pretext and have him killed.'

In the course of time the prince completed his studies. Having got ready for his journey back to Banaras, he touched the feet of the Master and received his blessings. "Sir," he said, "I request you to come to Banaras after I become king. I shall then be in a position to give you a reception which you merit." The Master was glad to hear these words, and he promised to make the trip to Banaras in due course.

In course of time the prince became king. One day he thought of the vow he had taken in regard to his teacher. So he got an invitation sent to the Master at Takshasila.

The Master accepted the invitation but did not start for Banaras at once. The boy had ascended the throne only recently, he thought.



Let him enjoy his new status for some time. He could go and see him later.

Some time later the Master made the trip to Banaras. When he went to see the king, the entire court received him with great respect because he was a teacher to the king himself. He was made to sit next to the king.

The rage that was smouldering in the breast of the king began to grow into a fire at the sight of this old man who had once dared to punish him. In the midst of general conversation, he suddenly turned to the Master and said, "Sir, one who dealt out punishment for a mere handful of groundnuts is surely fit to be put to death. Tell me, is it not so?"

None in the court save the Master could

DID YOU KNOW?

24 Karat gold is not pure gold, as there is a small amount of copper added to it. Pure gold is so soft that it can be moulded with bare hands.

nutrine India's largest selling sweets and toffees.



understand what the king said. He wanted the Master to undergo the tortures of a doomed man. He was going to die anyway.

But the Master was not shocked as the king expected. On the other hand, he revealed the king's secret in the full court.

"O King," he said, "while you were my pupil and under my charge, you did something which was beneath your status. It is the duty of the teacher to punish his pupil when he does something wrong, and to make him walk the path of rectitude. Had I not punished you that day, you would have been a bandit by now, instead of occupying this dignified throne. A wise man would never get angry with one who punished him for a misdeed; on the contrary, he would be grateful!"

Now that the entire court knew of his misdeed, the king blushed with shame. He fell at the Master's feet and cried, "O Great One! I made one more slip and you've pulled me up once again. I'm really grateful to you!"

By saying these words, the king earned the respect of not only the entire court but the Master himself. The king insisted that the Master remained with him for good. So the Master gave up his residence in Takshasila and settled down in Banaras.



What looks a little like an octopus and can live for 1,000 years? It's the odd Welwitschia plant, which grows in the desert areas of Namibia and Angola, two countries in Africa. The Welwitschia has only two leaves that shred into many long, leathery pieces as they grow. Welwitschias provide shelter for small desert animals and are an important part of the web of life in the desert.

DID YOU KNOW?

Porpoises and dolphins communicate with each other by squeaking, growling, moaning, and whistling. Porpoises and dolphins are mammals. There are about 40 species or kinds of porpoises and dolphins. Most porpoises and dolphins navigate by using "echolocation". The largest member of the dolphin family is called an Orcas or killer whale.





MILLIONAIRES UP

Economists of India often tell us that nearly 30 per cent of the population are placed "below the poverty line". The governments in the Centre as well as States are tackling the situation, trying to reduce the percentage by launching several programmes and schemes to improve their status. According to the Planning Commission, however, the number of millionaires and 'crorepatis' in the county has gone up by nearly 68 per cent in the last four years. Disclosing the figures in the Lok Sabha, the Minister of State for Planning said that in 2000-2001, the number was 54,900. In 2006, this number has gone up to 92,000. India may not be a rich country, but we have enough wealthy women and men!

REFLECTORS FOR ELEPHANTS



In metropolitan cities, traffic policemen can be seen wearing arm bands and jackets which reflect light at night even from a distance. Two Keralites, Harinarayanan and his friend Muhammad Rafi of Alathur, have prepared luminescent outfit for elephants. They were prompted to think of a method to save elephants, who often move at night from one place to another. They were sad that five elephants had met with tragic end in the last three years during their noctural journeys in the dark. On September 3 last, as many as 139 elephants took part in an elephant 'mela' in Trichur. All of them were given protective "cover" as they dispersed and went back to their respective 'homes'. Incidentally, Harinarayanan makes the design while Rafi, who is a professional tailor, stitches them with reflector cloth.



THE BLIND CAN NOW READ

School children and college-going students, who have their eyesight impaired, often take the help of 'readers' who do it as a social service. At examinations, they read out the questions, the candidate dictates the answers, which are written down by the 'writers' without changing the language or facts. Recently, a hand held device has been fabricated by the scientists of the Central Scientific Instruments Organisation in Chandigarh. This device works like "reading eyes" and is expected to eliminate the need to convert the text into Braille. The CSIO Director feels that the visually impaired will be able to read any printed material.

TURNING THE TABLES

Many courtiers in Emperor Akbar's court were jealous of Birbal. They knew he was intelligent. In fact, he was far more intelligent than any of them! He had an answer for every situation. Often he solved problems that faced the Emperor. So, he received special favours at the hands of the Emperor.

They wished they could be as clever and quick-witted. Who would make this wish come true? Intelligence could not be bought. It was God's gift. And God had gifted intelligence to Birbal.



"O! God! Why were you so partial?" some of the courtiers sighed. God did not reply. Silence, even God knew, was golden.

The courtiers, however, would not remain silent. They got into the act. They sat down and discussed how they could make Birbal lose favour with the Emperor. Several suggestions were considered. Finally, one of the courtiers (for the purpose of this story, let us call him Vinay) said he had a plan. They asked him for details. He said he would cast doubts on Birbal's integrity.

"Will the Emperor believe you?" they asked.

"He will. Wait and see," Vinay gloated.

"Won't you tell us how you propose to do that?" they asked.

"No. I must keep it a secret. But, rest assured, my plan won't fail," Vinay smiled confidently.

The courtiers danced for joy. One of them told Vinay, "You aren't a whit less intelligent than Birbal. You're the right man to take on Birbal. Execute that plan, successfully. Then we shall accept you as the brightest star among us all. The Emperor may give you the place that Birbal will lose if your plan succeeds." The courtiers were lavish in praise.

"My plan will succeed. I am sure of that," Vinay puffed up with pride.

"Your name may be Vinay, but there is no humility in you," a courtier joked.

Vinay gave him a stern stare, held his head high and asked, "Do you want me to remain humble, practise humility? Or you want me to knock out Birbal?"

"Bring Birbal down on his heels. And we shall accept you as our leader," the courtiers gave their colleague, who had made a joke with Vinay's name, an icy look and turned to Vinay with admiring eyes.

"Thank you," Vinay grinned. "Tomorrow, be at the

Court at the usual hour. I shall come after all of you have assembled. All of you, including Birbal! Before the Emperor notices my absence and asks where I am, tell him very politely that I had sent word stating that I had come across a sensational crime. I am so shocked that I am reeling under its impact. Therefore, I seek the Emperor's permission to arrive a little late. When I come, I shall present to the Emperor full details of the crime."



The courtiers nodded their heads. They gossiped for some time. Dusk was falling fast when the meeting ended. They went their way.

Next day, the courtiers arrived at the Court. All of them including Birbal. The only notable absentee was the clever courtier who was preparing the plan to bring Birbal into the bad books of the Emperor.

"*Shahenshah padaar rahe hain*!" the Court attendant tapped the floor with his staff and shouted thrice, announcing the arrival of the Emperor. The courtiers stood up. The guards stood at attendance.

The Emperor smiled at the courtiers, and sat on the throne. Three young women took their place behind the throne. They fanned him. The cool air kept the Emperor in comfort.

The courtiers bowed.

"Be seated, O Noble Sires!" the Emperor waved his hand.

The courtiers sat down. the Emperor started checking whether all the courtiers were present.

Then one of the courtiers stood up, bowed and waited for the royal nod. "You've something to tell us, O Noble Sire?" the Emperor asked.

The courtier bowed again. "Shahenshah, the venerable Vinay sent word that he would be late."

"What is holding him back?" the Emperor raised his voice.

"Shahenshah, he has discovered a heinous crime. The chief suspect in this crime is a powerful official at the Court. Vinay is shocked. He said he would rush here once he is free from the shock," said one of the courtiers.

The Emperor scowled. The thought that one of the officials at his court could be involved in a crime upset him. He sank into silence. Soon afterwards Vinay walked in. His footsteps broke the silence.

The Emperor looked up. Vinay bowed low, waved his arm respectfully and said, "*Salam alei kum, Shahenshah*!"

"I am told you had learnt of a crime."

"Yes, Shahenshah."

"I learn that the prime suspect in this case is a powerful official at the Royal Court?"

"I'm sorry, Shahenshah, but it is indeed so," Vinay behaved as if he was sad that things had come to such a pass.

"Tell me what happened. Who is the suspect?" the Emperor stood up. His eyes glowed like burning coal.

"Let's forget it, Shahenshah. I don't want to speak ill of one of my colleagues," Vinay posed as if he hated himself for having to accuse one of the courtiers.

"Nobody is above law. Not even the Badshah. Who is the accused?" Emperor Akbar thundered.

"Shahenshah! The accused is Birbal!"

The courtiers sat up. All eyes turned to Birbal. They had expected that charge. They hoped that Vinay would prove his charge. Otherwise, he would get it on his neck.

Birbal was taken aback. He scowled, unsure what more was to come.

"Birbal?" the Emperor could not believe it.

"Yes, Shahenshah! Yesterday evening, I was walking back home when I saw Birbal pick up a gold necklace from the roadside. I thought it had dropped off and he was just picking up what was his. Instead of putting it on, he tucked it in the folds of his dress and walked off quickly. I was about to move when a young man rushed in crying, `Did anyone see my necklace?' he was almost in tears. I asked him whether he had indeed lost the necklace. He said he had. I wanted more information, but the man was totally distraught. He ran off searching for what he had lost. I tried to catch up with him. But he was too fast for me. Alas! I'm no longer young!"



"Birbal!" the Emperor's voice was razor sharp.

"Shahenshah!" Birbal stood up.

"Is it true?"

"No, Shahenshah."

"Shahenshah! I may be wrong," Vinay butted in.

"How do we confirm that Birbal is not guilty?" the Emperor asked.

"Shahenshah! If *Alampana* will not take offence, I suggest Birbal agrees to stand a test to prove his innocence."

"What test?"

"Shahenshah, I shall bring a heated, red-hot rod to the court. Let Birbal touch it with his bare hands. If he remains unscathed, he must be innocent," Vinay dropped a hint.

"Shahenshah, we're sure Birbal can't be guilty of such a mean act. Yet, it'll be good he proves his innocence by undergoing this test," said the oldest among the courtiers. Most of the other courtiers nodded their heads.

"I agree," the Emperor turned to Birbal. "I know you are not guilty. But since the charge has been made, it is better you clear yourself. In the eyes of the law, all are equal."

"I understand, Shahenshah!" Birbal said politely.

He knew he was in a tight corner. The charge was false. But who would take his word? He also knew no one could touch a red-hot rod with his bare hands without getting scalded. The rod would hurt the guilty as much as the innocent. But he could not tell that in the Royal Court.

How could he escape?

It did not take him long to find a way out. He bowed, first to the Emperor, and then to the courtiers. He made a special show of respect to Vinay.

"Shahenshah! The test suggested by my revered colleague is acceptable to me, but . . . ," he paused.

"Go on," the Emperor nudged.

"Shahenshah! Vinay says he is telling the truth. I believe him. But I think he, too, could prove he is telling the truth. All that I want him to do is to fetch the red-hot rod, and carry it in his hand to the Court. I shall take it, I

hope, from his hands, unhurt by the heat,. . .," Birbal paused.

"Oh, no," Vinay howled like a dog hit by a stone. He knew he had been worsted. Birbal had turned the tables on him.

"Shahenshah! I'm sorry. Thinking of it, I now realize that the man who picked up the necklace and walked away was slightly taller than Birbal. It could not have been Birbal. My revered colleague won't stoop so low," Vinay knelt on the ground and buried his face in his hands, seeking Royal mercy.

"Take him away! To the dungeon he goes, till we decide what to do with him," the Emperor breathed down at the wily courtier, his eyes glowing like those of an enraged lion.

The guards dragged Vinay out.

The Emperor turned to Birbal, hugged him and said, "I'm sorry, Birbal! For a moment, I thought you could be guilty. I should have known you would never do that."



"Shahenshah! I owe my all to you. I'll never play false to you," Birbal bent low and expressed his gratitude to the Emperor. ***- R.K. Murthi***

TO FULFIL A CONDITION

One morning, a young man walked into the city's biggest pet shop and said, "I've heard that you can supply all kinds of animals."

"Yes, sir! We pride ourselves on our commitment and ability to supply any breed of animal or bird – even the most exotic ones," answered the salesman eagerly. "We go the extra mile to satisfy our customers. Last year, we even imported two cockatoos from Malaysia for a customer who wanted a pair!"

"That's good," broke in the young man. "I'm sure you won't have that much difficulty in filling my order. I want 500 cockroaches, 250 beetles, 50 spiders, 25 lizards, ten rats, and five mice to be delivered at my place by tomorrow morning." The salesman was dumbfounded. After a moment, he recovered his wits and said, "I...I'm afraid we can only supply the mice, sir. This is the most unusual request we've received! May I know why you want these animals?"



"Well, I'm vacating my rented house tomorrow morning," said the young man. "And the lease says I must leave the house in exactly the same condition in which I found it!"



THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFT

Suryasen was the able ruler of Vindhyagiri. He was compassionate towards his citizens, and their welfare was always uppermost in his mind. The subjects, too, in turn held their king in high esteem. He had a small, but powerful army and the soldiers were extremely loyal to the king. He also had a very wise prime minister and a number of efficient and honest officials. Thus, the kingdom enjoyed a peaceful time.

However, there was one disturbing factor. The rulers of Vidarbha and Vaishali, who were his neighbours, were not friendly with him. They aspired to bring Vindhyagiri into their fold. Suryasen, however, tactfully avoided any direct confrontation with them and tried to maintain a congenial relationship with them. But both his neighbours were looking for an opportunity to start a conflict with him on some issue and then go for a war.

When Suryasen's son turned four years old, he wanted to conduct the ceremony of '*Vidyarambham*' for the prince on Vijaya Dasami day. He wished to celebrate it in a grand manner, and to make use of the opportunity to further the good relationship with his neighbouring kings. He invited both of them to attend the ceremony. They, on the other hand, wanted to exploit the goodwill visit for creating a deliberate conflict with Suryasen which would lead to a war with his kingdom.

Hectic activities were seen in the capital on the eve of the ceremony. According to the tradition, the young prince was supposed to go in procession on an elephant with his father along the streets of the capital and receive the blessings of the citizens. The procession would end at the gurukul, where the guru would initiate 'aksharabhyas' by making the child write holy names on a slate. It will be followed by a great feast where the public would participate along with the royal family. The whole capital was in a festive mood.

A day before the ceremony, the king of Vidarbha, Mahipal and the king of Vaishali, Sisupal, arrived with their entourage. A red carpet welcome was accorded to them. At night, after the guests were treated to a sumptuous dinner, Mahipal told Suryasen, "My friend! I'm delighted to participate in the function. I've brought a gift for your son!" He then took out a slate enclosed



You know that wind is moving air. But what causes the air to move? It's the uneven heating of the earth's atmosphere. As the sun warms the earth's surface, the atmosphere warms, too. Some parts of the earth receive direct rays from the sun all through the year and are always warm. Other places receive indirect rays, so the climate is colder. Warm air, which weighs less than cool air, rises. Then cool air moves in and replaces the rising warm air. This movement of air is what makes the wind blow.

in a beautiful ivory frame. "I want you to honour me by using this board for your son's initiation."

Immediately, Sisupal, too, took out a slate in a gold frame. "Dear Surya! This is a gift from me! I'm sure you would only use this board on the auspicious occasion."

Suryasen was now in a dilemma. He thought, 'Surely, they've come here with a plan. If I use Mahipal's gift, Sisupal would take offence. If I choose Sisupal's gift, Mahipal would take it as an insult. Either way, one of them would make a prestige issue out of this and wage a war against me. It would be a serious problem if I don't handle this issue tactfully.' With a perplexed mind, he accepted both gifts.

Next morning, the procession started. Suryasen and the prince rode on an elephant through the streets of the capital to the cheers of the people who had thronged all thoroughfares right from early morning. The prince received the blessings from the people. En route, amidst the tumultuous cheering, the king noticed one young child weeping loudly while his mother was trying to console him.

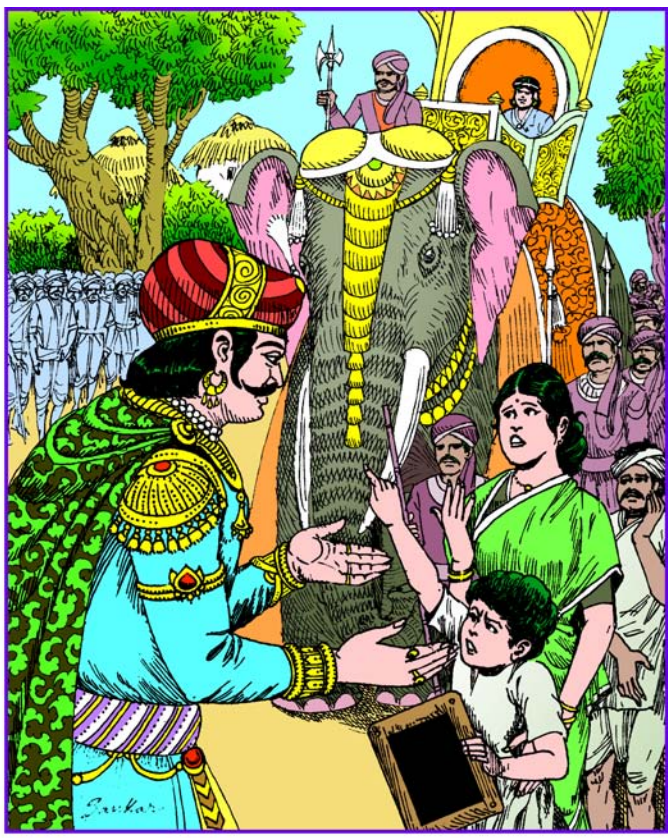
At once, he got down from the elephant and went up to the child. "Son, what makes you cry at this joyous moment? Don't you know your prince is going to have his *vidyarambham* today?"

The child replied: "I want to present a gift to the prince. But my mother is not allowing me to do it!"

The king was elated. "Dear child! Your prince will accept any gift from his dear citizens, however humble it might be! It's only your love that counts. Please give me whatever it is!"

The child took out a simple slate with a wooden frame and handed it to the king. "O King! This is my humble gift to the prince. I want him to use this for the *aksharabhyas*!" The king cuddled the toddler fondly and accepted it from him and said, "Come along with your mother to the ceremony." As he mounted the elephant again with the gift, he had decided what to do with it.

Soon, the procession came to an end at the gurukul. The king came to the dais with his son



NUTRINE QUIZ-3

1. Which State has the only diamond mine in India?
   a. Maharashtra b. Madhya Pradesh
   c. Rajasthan d. Karnataka

2. Which of these rivers flows into the Arabian Sea?
   a. Narmada b. Godavari
   c. Krishna d. Cauvery

nutrine India's largest selling sweets and toffees.

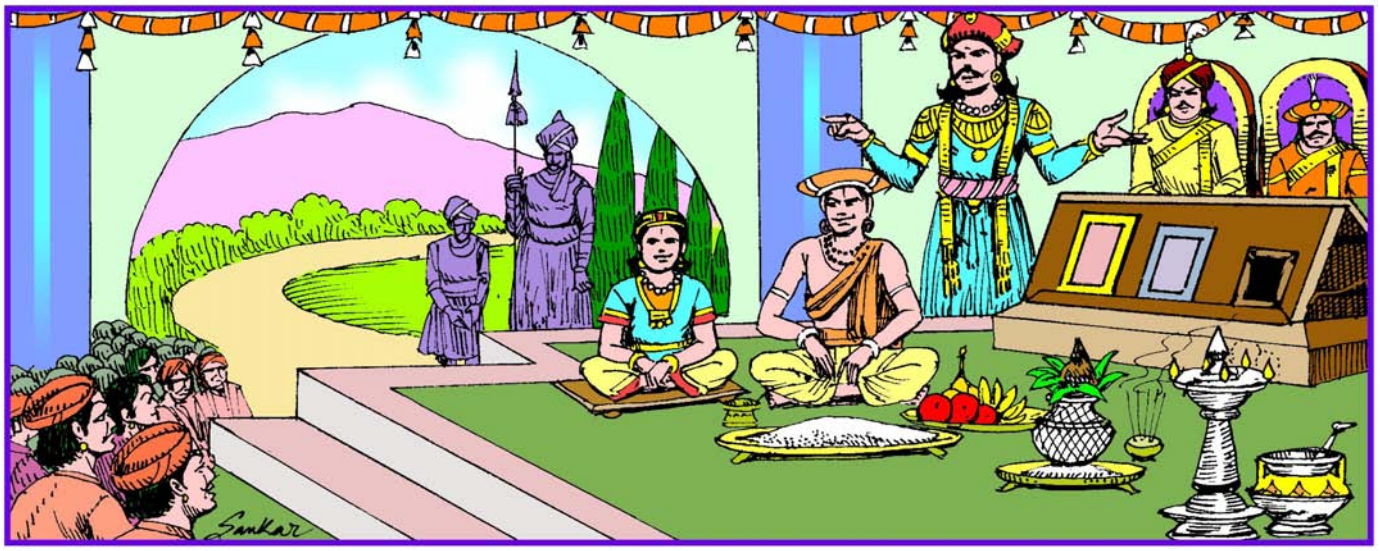
(Answer on page 37)

and addressed the people. "I take pleasure in inviting all of you, including our guests of honour, for the function which would begin shortly. Now, I'm in a dilemma and I would like to seek your advice. Usually, *aksharabhyas* is done on a slate board and I had made one for this occasion." He then showed the slate with the silver frame. He continued: "However, my esteemed guests have brought more expensive and beautiful slates which are here. During the procession, one child presented a simple slate for the prince. Out of the four, however, only one can be used. I want to know your opinion regarding which one to be used on the auspicious occasion. You all know very well that I love you very much and value your collective opinion in all issues. In this case, too, I shall abide by your decision!"

At once, there was an uproar from the crowd: "The slate gifted by the child should be used." The king was happy to find that things had taken place the way he wanted. He turned to his guests and said: "My esteemed guests! You've heard the verdict of the people. Under these circumstances I'm compelled to select the gift given by the child. Please take no offence! The gift given by the child might be very simple, but it is a token of the sublime love of my subjects towards me and the royal family and I can't ignore it. In a democratic government like mine, the gift given by the child on behalf of the citizens is the most precious one."

Both Mahipal and Sisupal were speechless. They admired how tactfully Suryasen had handled an embarrassing situation to his advantage. They could also realize the implicit faith and the immense affection the people had for him. Such a king enjoying the goodwill of his citizens could never be conquered in any war, they felt.

Soon, the ceremony started. Suryasen picked up two more poor boys along with the boy who had gifted a slate and conducted *aksharabhyas* for them also using the other slates.



KALEIDOSCOPE



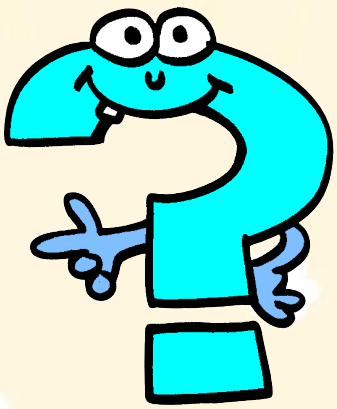
BLOSSOM'S LITTLE SECRET



Once upon a time, there lived a little girl called Blossom. She lived with her parents. School had just closed and the summer vacation had started. This time Blossom went to her uncle's house, which was in a small village. She spent most of the time playing with her friends in the village. One day, as she was walking beside a stream, she heard a voice crying. Blossom looked around to see who it was who was crying. She saw a little fairy sitting near the stream. Blossom asked her why she was crying. The fairy told her she had no friends and was all alone. Blossom comforted her and said she would be her friend. The fairy was delighted. She and Blossom became best friends. They played happily every day. Nobody ever knew this. That was Blossom's own little secret.

- P. Malavika (9) Chennai

WHO AM I?



1. I am a 7 letter word. Remove 1 letter, it remains the same; remove 2 letters, it remains the same; remove 3 letters, it remains the same; remove 4 letters, it remains the same; remove 5 letters, it remains the same; remove 6 letters, it remains the same; remove 7 letters, it still remains the same!

- S. Palaniappan (10), Hosur

2. I am a 6 letter word. If I am split into two, one part becomes the present, the other past.

M. Subhasri (10), Hosur

(Turn to page 36 for answers)



BEST FRIENDS

Best friends are one in mind,
In two bodies,
Playing and chatting happily.

They are like two peas in a pod
Even difficult to be described by a bard.

They are always seen together
However be the weather.

Not everyone is lucky enough
To have a best friend
And a love to lend.
Friendship keeps us close,
And please do not make it loose.

S.Priyakrishnan (14), Chennai

GROWING UP

Heaven knows when I will grow
I often hear Mother say, "Heaven knows
When our daughter will grow?!"
So, to be big, I wore Mother's dress
Which kept coming down,
I tried to do Daddy's chores
But always ended with a frown,
I tried to study sister's history
But ended up studying none,
I tried to play brother's racing car
And ended up breaking one.
I went and told my Mother
Of all that I did,
She laughed and said,
"Oh! You'll never grow big!"
But now I'm eleven and all grown up.
I often hear Mother say,
"Our daughter's grown big" in a gulp.
Hip! Hip! Hoorah!

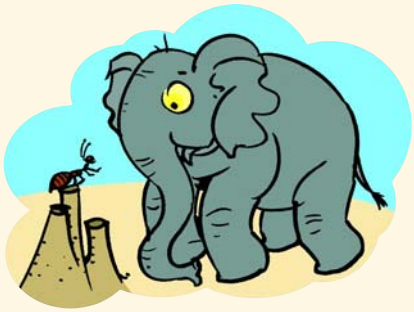
Sarada Mahesh (11), Bangalore





Mother : Romi, just see why your little sister is crying.
Romi : Ma, I've no time, I'm busy eating her biscuits.

❖ ❖ ❖



One day an ant met an elephant.
Ant : Come on, friend, let's play cricket.
Elephant : No, my grandma has warned me against talking to strangers.
Ant : Don't worry, if she were to come, you may hide behind me.

A. Lokesh Goud, Hyderabad



Father : Murad, where do you stand in the class?
Murad : In a corner facing the wall, Dad.

❖ ❖ ❖



Prateek : Prem, why have you tucked up your trousers?
Prem : I want people to see my new shoes.

Dipankar Dutta
New Delhi

Doctor : Why didn't you take those iron tablets?
Patient : They're fake, doctor.
Doctor : How do you know?
Patient : I tested them with a magnet; they weren't attracted.



❖ ❖ ❖



Shyam : Are there any letters for me?
Postman : What's your name?
Shyam : It must be on the envelopes.

S. Vismitha Katyayani (12), Bengaluru

Mother : What're you doing in the kitchen?
Sania : I'm helping Amit.
Mother : And what's *he* doing there?
Sania : He's eating the *jelabies* made for the guest.



❖ ❖ ❖



Teacher : Santosh, now that you've come back to school, what would you like to do?
Santosh : Go back home, miss.

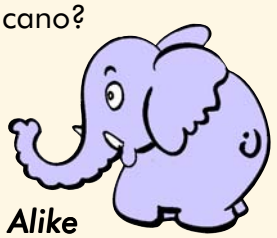
Aditya Paresh Ramnathkar, Borivli (W)

RIDDLES



1. What is a volcano?

2. Why do elephants have trunks?



Ashuthosh K.S. (13), Alike



3. Why should you not reveal secrets in a cornfield?

4. Where do ghosts go for a swim?

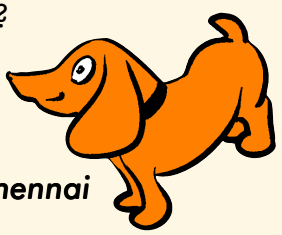
G.S.Anush (11), Sohar

5. What is black when it is clean and white when it is dirty?

Panneru Arvind (12) Kharagpur



6. Which cup is a cartoon character?

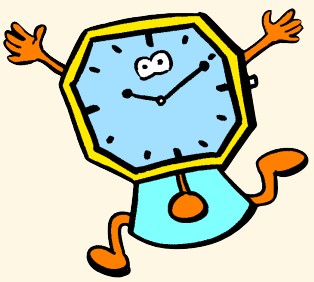


7. What follows a dog wherever it goes?

P. Malavika (9), Chennai

8. Which part of a clock is always old?

9. What has a bed but does not sleep?



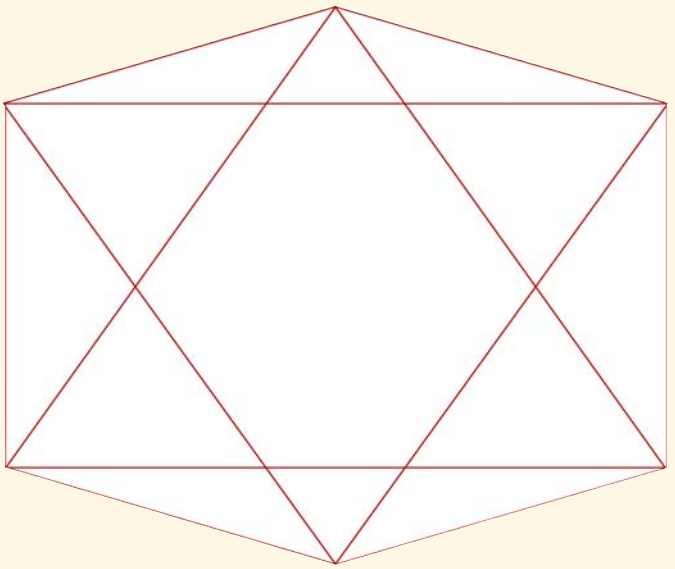
Vismita Katyayani (12) Bangalore

10. Why are clocks not allowed in a library?

Karthik Bhushan (13) Udupi

TRIANGULAR TANGLE

How many triangles can you count in the diagram below:



- K. Samuel Suhas (11), Hyderabad

BRAIN-TEASERS



1. Sita's mother has three daughters. The eldest is Gita; Preeti is the second one. Who is the third?

2. What is the answer: B x B + F÷E =

Basurjit Maisnan (10), Imphal

ANSWERS TO RIDDLES:

1. A mountain blowing its top,
2. They had trouble carrying suitcases,
3. Because corns have ears,
4. In the Dead Sea, 5. Blackboard, 6. Buttercup, 7. Its tail, 8. Its second hand, 9. A river, 10. Because they tock too much.

ANSWER TO WHO AM I?:

1. Post Box
2. See-saw

ANSWER TO BRAIN-TEASERS:

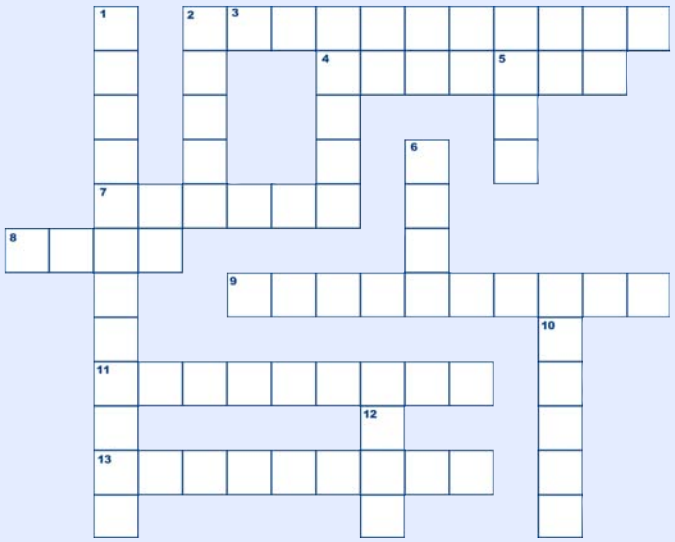
1. Sita, 2. Two

ANSWER TO TRIANGULAR TANGLE:

15

PUZZLE DAZZLE

CROSSWORD ON VEHICLES



Here is a crossword on vehicles. The clues below will help you solve it.



Down:

1. A popular mode of transport in India, Pakistan, and Nepal. A motorized version of the traditional rickshaw, a small two-or three-wheeled cart manually pulled (12).
2. A railborne vehicle, lighter than a train, designed for transport of passengers within, close to, or between villages, and towns (4).
4. A structure designed to float on, and provide transport over, water (4).
5. A four-wheeled vehicle for passenger transportation, propelled by an engine (3).
6. A large automobile for carrying a large number of persons in addition to the driver and a conductor. A shortened version of ***omnibus*** (3).
10. Rail vehicles that move along guides to transport freight or passengers from one place to another. The guideway usually consists of conventional rail tracks, monorail or maglev (5).
12. A vehicle used for transporting goods or groups of people (3).

Across:

3. An aircraft without wings that obtains its lift from the rotation of overhead blades (10).
4. A two or three-wheeled vehicle designed to be propelled solely by human power (7).
7. A vehicle, or aircraft, which obtains thrust by the reaction to the ejection of fast moving exhaust gas from within a rocket engine. Often the term is also used to mean a rocket engine (6).
8. A large, sea-going watercraft. It usually has sufficient size to carry its own boats, such as lifeboats, dinghies, or runabouts (4).
9. A two-wheeled vehicle powered by an engine (10).
11. A specialized watercraft that can operate under water (9).
13. An aircraft having a fixed wing and powered by propellers or jets (9).

- by R Vaasugi

NUTRINE QUIZ-3 ANSWERS :



1. b) Madhya Pradesh, 2. a) Narmada

SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD:

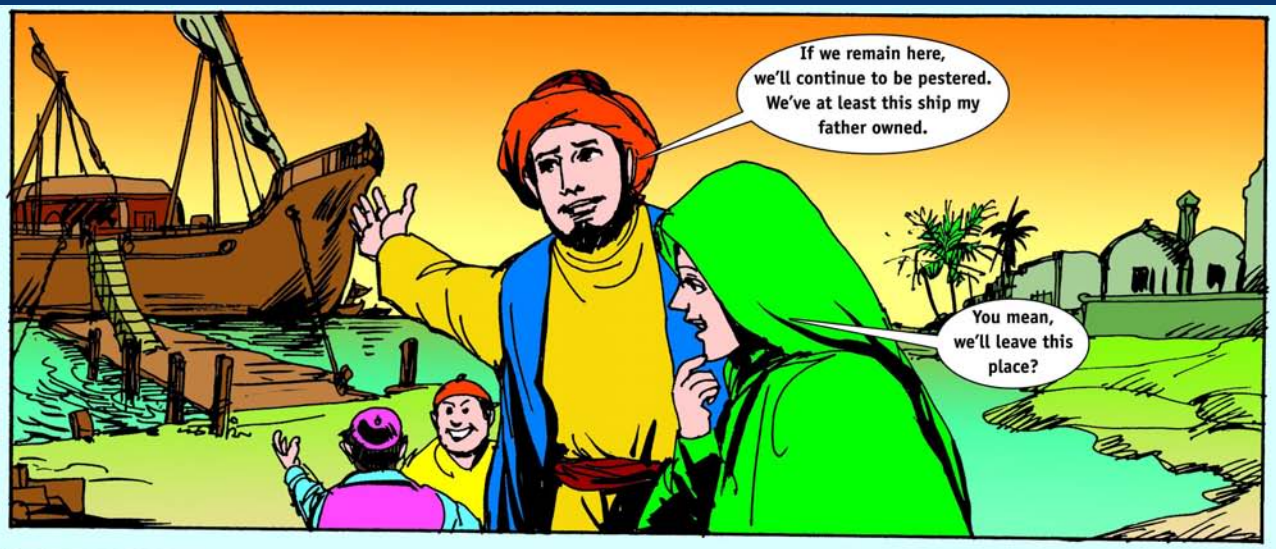
Down: 1. Auto rickshaw, 2. Tram, 4. Boat, 5. Car, 6. Bus, 10. Train, 12.Van.

Across: 3.Helicopter, 4.Bicycle, 7. Rocket, 8. Ship, 9. Motorcycle, 11.Submarine, 13.Aeroplane.

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

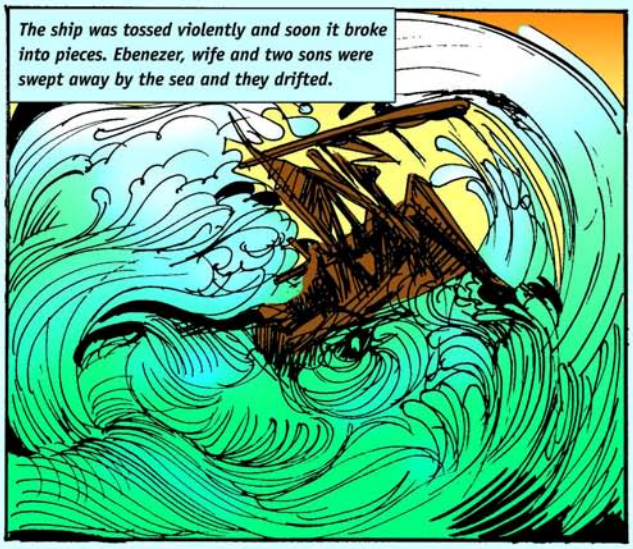


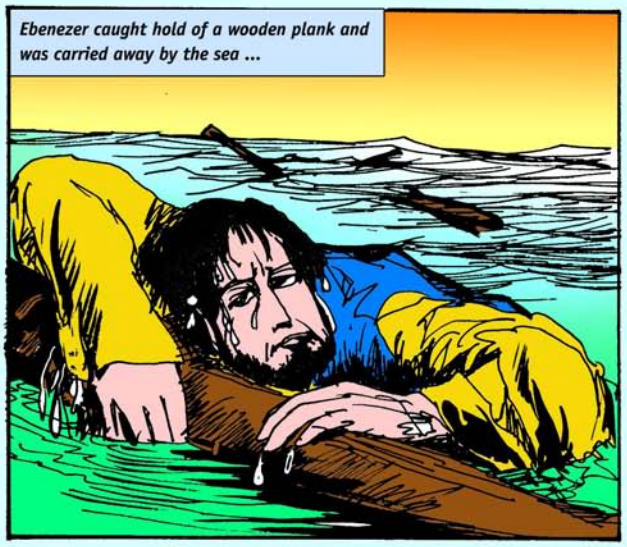
SHIPWRECKED



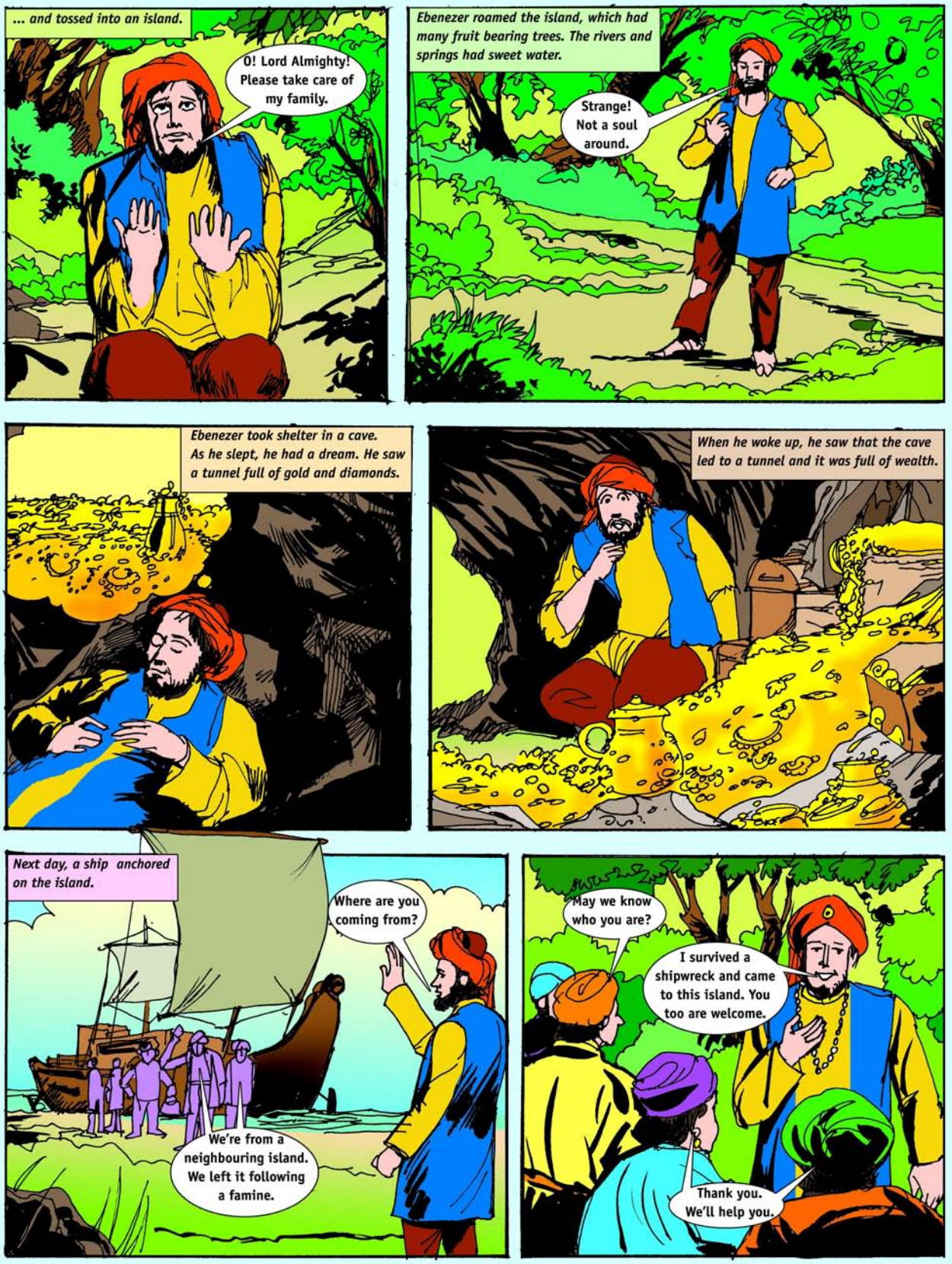








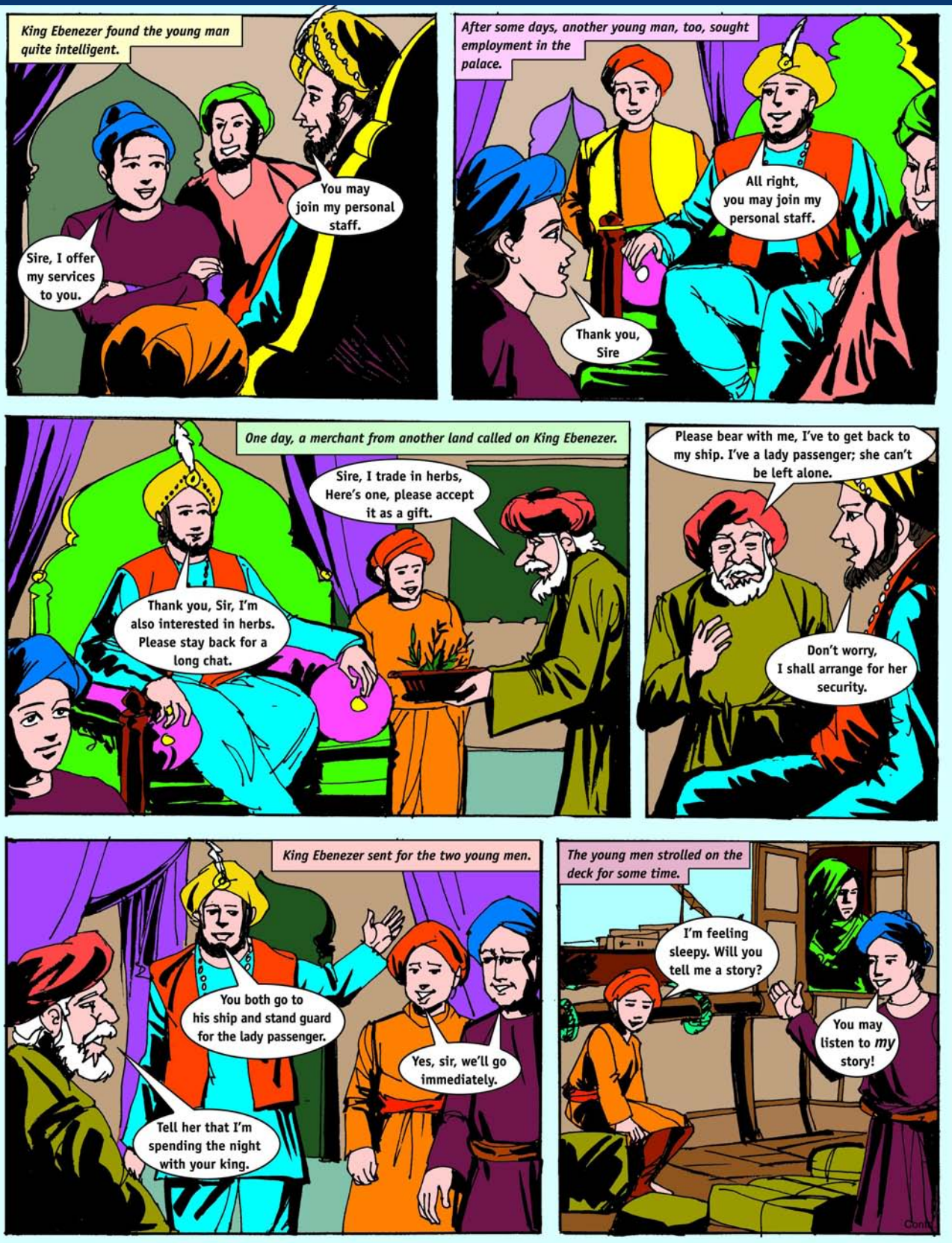
THE ARABIAN NIGHTS



SHIPWRECKED



THE ARABIAN NIGHTS



SHIPWRECKED



HOW THE GIRAFFE GOT HIS LONG NECK



Long, long ago the giraffe resembled his cousin, the antelope. He had a similar neck, thin legs and a similar brownish red coat. So, how did giraffe get his long neck?

All was well in the open grasslands of Africa until a terrible drought raged in the region. Trees shrunk, water holes dried up, and animals went hungry. The competition to find greener pastures was fierce among animals. Only the strongest survived.

One day, Giraffe met his friend Rhino on the dry plains. "My friend," said Giraffe, "see how the animals are trampling the remaining grass in their search for food. Soon we'll have nothing left to eat. But look at those tall Acacia trees in the distance. If only our necks were long enough, we could have surely nibbled at the tender leaves!"

Rhino glumly nodded. "Perhaps," he finally said, "we could meet the witchdoctor. He's very powerful and he could make our necks long!"

"What a marvellous idea!" exclaimed Giraffe. "Why don't we go and meet him?"

So Rhino and Giraffe trudged along dry, difficult terrain for many long days until they reached the dwelling of the witchdoctor.

NUTRINE CONTEST-3



Take a close look at the Nutrine advertisment on the back cover and find the number of times the word "Nutrine" appears. Write down the answer on a piece of paper, add your name, date of birth, class, name of school, and complete home address with PINcode and send it to **Chandamama India Ltd.,** 82 Defence Officers Colony, Ekkatuthangal, Chennai 600 097, before DECEMBER 31. An attractive prize* awaits you.



India's largest selling sweets and toffees.

**Conditions apply*

"Witchdoctor!" they called out. "Can you help us?"

When the witchdoctor heard what the two beasts desired, he laughed out aloud. "Of course, I can help you! Come here by noon tomorrow and I'll give you both some magic herbs to eat. Soon you'll find your necks reaching the height of the Acacia trees!"

Giraffe and Rhino thanked the witchdoctor and trudged back home.

The next day Giraffe was the first to reach the witchdoctor's hut, but there was no sign of Rhino. Where was he? He had stopped on his way to nibble at fresh grass which he found near a water hole. Giraffe waited for his friend for a long time but the witchdoctor lost his patience and gave Giraffe the magic herb he had collected, including Rhino's share.

Giraffe ate the magic herbs and suddenly felt giddy. Soon he found himself growing tall and his head reached the top of the Acacia trees. He looked down admiringly at his legs and neck. How long they had grown! He was delighted, for he soon could nibble at the fresh leaves of the Acacia.

Rhino suddenly remembered his appointment with the witchdoctor and trotted to his hut. On seeing the tall giraffe, he gasped.

"Give me the herbs! I, too, would like to have a neck as long as that of Giraffe!" he told the witchdoctor, but he just shook his head.

"You're much too late!" he told the lazy animal. "Your friend has eaten all the herbs."

Rhino was so angry with the witchdoctor that he chased him a long way into the bush, but he could not harm his tall friend.

It is believed that Giraffe to this day is a contented animal proud of his height, while the bad-tempered Rhino loses his temper every time he sees Giraffe's long, long neck.

- Nabanita Deshmukh

GLIMPSES OF THE DEVI BHAGAVATAM

That special Yajna required that all the sages should participate in it. When Vasishtha heard of the preparations for the Yajna, he forbade as many sages as he could to participate in it.

This infuriated Viswamitra. "If not by the Yagna, I'll send you to heaven by my power of Yoga!" he consoled Trishanku.

He gathered all his power and sent Trishanku upward to heaven. But when Trishanku reached the portals of heaven, Indra and the other gods did not allow him to cross into their domain. With his supernatural power, Indra toppled him.

Trishanku began falling. At once Viswamitra shouted, mustering his Yogic power, "Stop!"

Trishanku thus remained midway between the earth and heaven. Viswamitra now got ready to create a new heaven solely for Trishanku.

But a new heaven was bound to create new problems. Therefore, Indra requested the sage to refrain from doing so. Indra then gave Trishanku a new body in place of his mortal body and admitted him into heaven.

Sage Viswamitra's spiritual power made it possible for King Trishanku to ascend the heaven. His son, Prince Harishchandra, was crowned king.

Harishchandra remained childless for long. He was worried about the future of his kingdom. He met Sage Vasishtha, the guru of his dynasty, and asked him, "O Learned One, is it so ordained that I should not have any issue? Will you kindly enlighten me about it?"

"O young king, whatever be in store for one in one's destiny cannot be altered. But so far as having a child is concerned, it is Varuna who decides it. Meditate upon him. You shall be blessed with a child if he is pleased."

Harishchandra retired to a lonely spot on river Ganga



34. THE TRAVAILS OF A PRINCE

and meditated on Lord Varuna, the presiding deity of the waters. He appeared before him.

"Be pleased to grant me a son," said Harischandra.

"You can have a fine son on condition that you'll sacrifice him in a Yajna. Do you agree?" asked the god.

The king was in a fix. If he did not agree to the condition, he would not get a son. His penance would go in vain. But how could he sacrifice his son in a Yajna?

He kept quiet.

"I'm sorry, dear king, but there's no other way to alter your destiny. You cannot have a son unless you agree to this condition," said the god.

"Bless me with a son. O Lord Varuna, I shall face my fate!" the king cried out.

"Let it be so," said the god and he disappeared.

The king informed his queen Shaivya about the boon. In due course the queen gave birth to a son. The child was named Rohit.

Varuna called on the king in the guise of a Brahmin. Nobody but the king recognised him. "Come on, let me see you sacrifice your son in a Yajna!" he said.

The king was at his wit's end. He fumbled and said, "Well, at least a month must elapse before the newborn can be called a human child. Am I not right?"

"Very well, I shall come after a month," the god said.

The king heaved a sigh of relief. He tried to forget all about it by looking at the child's face.

But Varuna did not fail to appear after a month.

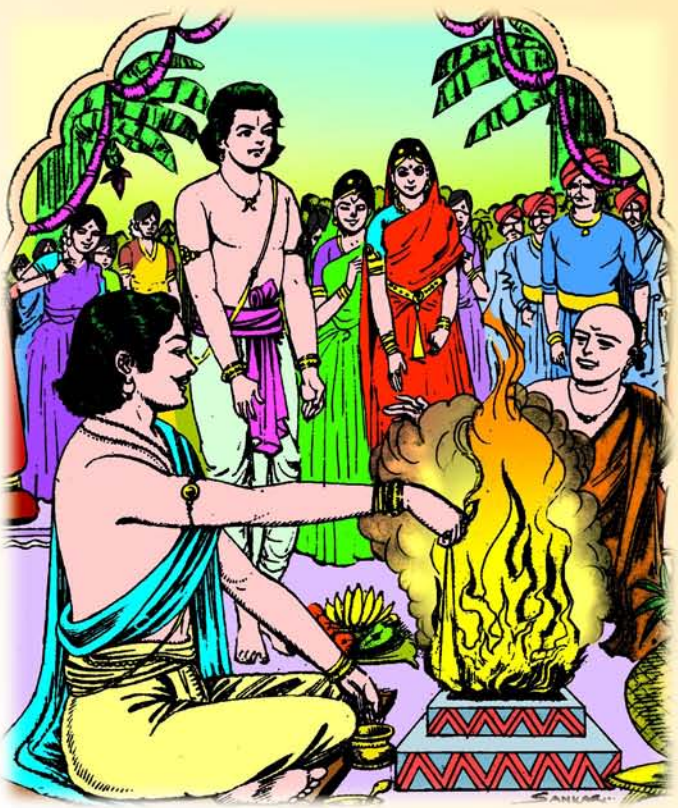
"O Lord! The child is toothless. How can it be eligible for sacrifice?" asked the king.

The god departed, only to reappear a few months later. "Your child must have gone through its teething. There can't be any more delay," he said sternly.

"O compassionate Varuna, you surely know that a child who has not yet gone through the head-shaving ceremony can hardly be called a human being. Should you not wait?" asked the king.

"Harishchandra! You hail from a great dynasty. Let it not be said that you are guilty of breach of faith! Let this be the last time I have to go back," said the god.

Days passed. The little prince's head-shaving ceremony was over. The very next day Varuna met the



king. "O King, you must now arrange for the Yajna."

"O kind-hearted lord! But don't the Brahmins believe that until the thread-ceremony has taken place, one is not fit to participate in any auspicious rite? According to the scriptures, a Brahmin boy becomes eligible for the thread ceremony at the age of eight, whereas a Kshatriya lad has to wait till eleven. Pray, let my boy live till he has gone through the thread-ceremony," the king pleaded.

Varuna went away quietly. The king felt relieved. Time passed happily for him.

But soon the prince became eleven years of age and wore the sacred thread after the necessary rituals. As soon as the ceremony was over. Varuna appeared before the king!

"Welcome O Lord Varuna! How lucky am I to receive you! My son has just begun to study the Vedas. You'll agree with me that he'll qualify better to become an object of sacrifice for the Yajna once he completes his study of the Vedas!" said the king.

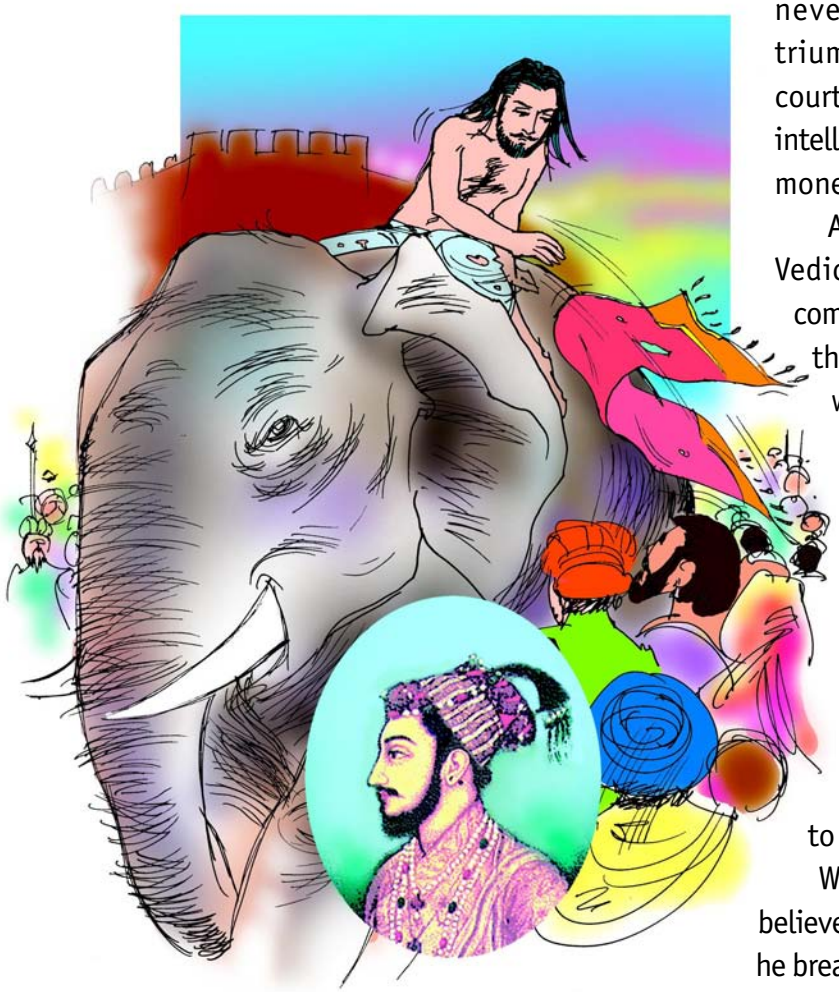
Varuna flared up. "You are trying to be clever with me. Very well, I shall be back as soon as your son's study is completed. Don't you play any trick with me then!" he said.

(To continue)

Anecdotes
FROM THE LIVES OF THE GREAT (12)

THE LAST GESTURE OF THE GREAT PRINCE

Emperor Shah Jahan had four sons. The eldest, Dara Shukoh was a remarkable young man, and unlike the other princes, he was a keen seeker after truth. He studied the Vedas and Upanishads with intense zeal and even translated some of the scriptures into Arabic. He was never tired of discussing philosophy with noted scholars of his time. He was not interested in either merrymaking or in politics. Though brave and strong, he never sought any glory through military triumphs. He charmed everybody with his courtesy and impressed all with his wit and intelligence. He generously helped the needy with money and material.



As he grew more and more interested in the Vedic scriptures and spent his time in the company of learned pundits, the fanatics among the courtiers became angry with him. But what could they do? Shah Jahan loved the eldest prince most and trusted him. The wise among the nobility found in the young man the image of his illustrious great-grandfather, Akbar.

The fanatics began to arouse hatred against him in the minds of the other three sons of Shah Jahan. The one who was ready to take advantage of the situation was the third son Aurangzeb, who did not hesitate to do anything cruel to fulfil his ambition.

When Shah Jahan fell ill in 1657 and it was believed that Dara Shukoh would succeed him after he breathed his last, Aurangzeb, assisted by Prince Murad, marched towards the capital to occupy the throne. Dara put up resistance with his father's support, but was defeated in three battles, one after another. Aurangzeb took his father prisoner and declared himself the emperor. His second brother, Suza, who too tried to capture the throne, died as a fugitive in Arakan. The simpleton, Murad, to whom Aurangzeb had promised half the empire was imprisoned and beheaded.

Prince Dara had to flee from place to place in the course of which he lost his wife. At last he took shelter with an Afghan chief named Jiwan Khan. He had once been ordered by Shah Jahan to be trampled to death by an elephant, when Dara had pacified his father and saved the man's life. But the ungrateful Jiwan Khan handed him over to Aurangzeb. Dara was brought back to Agra as prisoner.

Though he was the rightful heir to the throne, Dara Shukoh was made to sit on an aged elephant and paraded through the streets of Agra as thousands watched and sympathized with him, but he could do nothing except to lament his misfortune. A fakir cried out, "O noble prince, how many times had you given me alms! What a sorry sight for me that you have nothing to give me now!"

Alas, Dara had nothing on his person except torn linen and a shawl. He greeted the fakir and immediately removed his shawl and threw it at him. People who saw this sang his glory in a subdued way and shed tears. That was the last they saw of their beloved prince.

Aurangzeb made a farce of his trial by some fanatics who passed the death sentence on him. He was beheaded on August 30, 1659. **(MD)**

SOLVING A PROBLEM



One night, Kishan was pacing his bedroom restlessly, frowning and muttering to himself. After some thirty minutes, his wife Jaya could no longer keep quiet.

"What's the matter? What are you worrying about?" she demanded.

Kishan shot a shamefaced glance at her and said sulkily, "I suppose I'd better tell you; there's no use trying to hide it any more. Last month, I borrowed two hundred rupees from our neighbour Shakil, promising to return it after thirty days. Tomorrow is the thirty-first day, and I don't have the money! What on earth am I going to do? This worry is driving me crazy!"

"That's nothing to get so worked up about," said Jaya calmly. "There's only one way out now. Just go to Shakil and tell him that you can't pay him tomorrow. It's as simple as that!" Kishan pondered the matter and admitted, "You do have something there! I think I'll follow your advice. I'll go to him right away!"

Before Jaya could remonstrate with him over the lateness of the hour, he had dashed out of the house. Five minutes later, Kishan re-entered the room, happy and smiling. Jaya enquired, "What happened?"

"My worry is over now, thanks to your sage advice," said Kishan, beaming. "As for Shakil – now, *he* is pacing up and down his room!"



THE TRUE WEALTH

Once there was an island kingdom called Nidhi which was ruled by the kind and benevolent King Vishwanath. River Sundara flowed through the kingdom.

The king was a nature lover, and Nidhi abounded in flowers, fruits and trees. Every month the king himself went about planting saplings. Nidhi was dotted with parks and gardens in which the young, as well as the old, spent their leisure hours. The only source of fresh water on the island was river Sundara. The king made sure it remained pure. The river was held in reverence by the people of Nidhi and no one polluted it.

The king himself lived to a ripe old age before he died. His son Veer Singh ascended the throne. He was an ambitious young man who had had his studies in a far off land called Paschim. A year after he became king, his friend Lobh, who had studied with him in Paschim and lived there, came on a visit. Lobh went round Nidhi and was amazed at its natural wealth.

"Veer! Do you realise you are sitting on a gold mine?" he said.

"What do you mean?" said Veer Singh.

"Your kingdom is a treasure-house. Your forests are filled with the best variety of trees. You know, if you send their wood to other countries, you'll become one of the richest persons in this region."

"Really!" exclaimed Veer.

"Of course. Nidhi has an abundance of natural beauty. It has verdant hills, lovely valleys and a beautiful river. It is a paradise of Nature. You can make Nidhi a tourist resort. Thousands will flock to your kingdom." Lobh tried to explain.

"I don't know whether we should take such a revolutionary step. My father always believed that nature was like a Mother and that trees, mountains and rivers are to be worshipped," Veer said.

"Oh! Come on, Veer. Times have changed. Today you cannot live in isolation. When opportunity knocks on your door, you have to open it at once."

Within a year Nidhi was completely transformed. The trees were savagely cut and the wood shipped to different countries. With the destruction of the forests, the birds and animals lost their sanctuary. Lobh had zoos constructed to house the animals and birds. The magnificent creatures, which used to roam the forests and fly in the open skies in gay abandon, were now cooped up in small cages and tiny enclosures.

Attracted by Lobh's marketing strategy, tourists started flocking to Nidhi. They visited the parks and zoos and enjoyed themselves at the expense of the poor animals.

Their favourite haunt, however, was river Sundara. It was converted to a picnic spot. The river banks were lined with shops. Animal rides, merry-go-rounds and shops selling toys and gift items and many kinds of snacks were the main attractions. More than fifty boats were now offering rides to the tourists for a price.

River Sundara gradually grew disgusted with the state

of affairs. Its clear and clean waters were getting polluted every day. Men, women and children would throw food, waste paper and every kind of junk into its waters. The boats would invade its privacy, shattering its stillness and scare away the different kinds of fish which lived in the river.

The animals and birds, who would often come to Sundara to quench their thirst were now trapped and put in cages. Sundara really missed their company. She had no one to talk to anymore. Earlier, the creatures of the forest would carry lively tales and share their joys and sorrows with her. Now all she had for company were the dirty, noisy, messy tourists.

Sundara had a friend –a little bird called Koyal who understood her language as well as the language of the humans. She sent a message through Koyal to King Veer.

"O King! Sundara has sent a message. If you don't stop this destruction of Nidhi, she'll go back to her source."

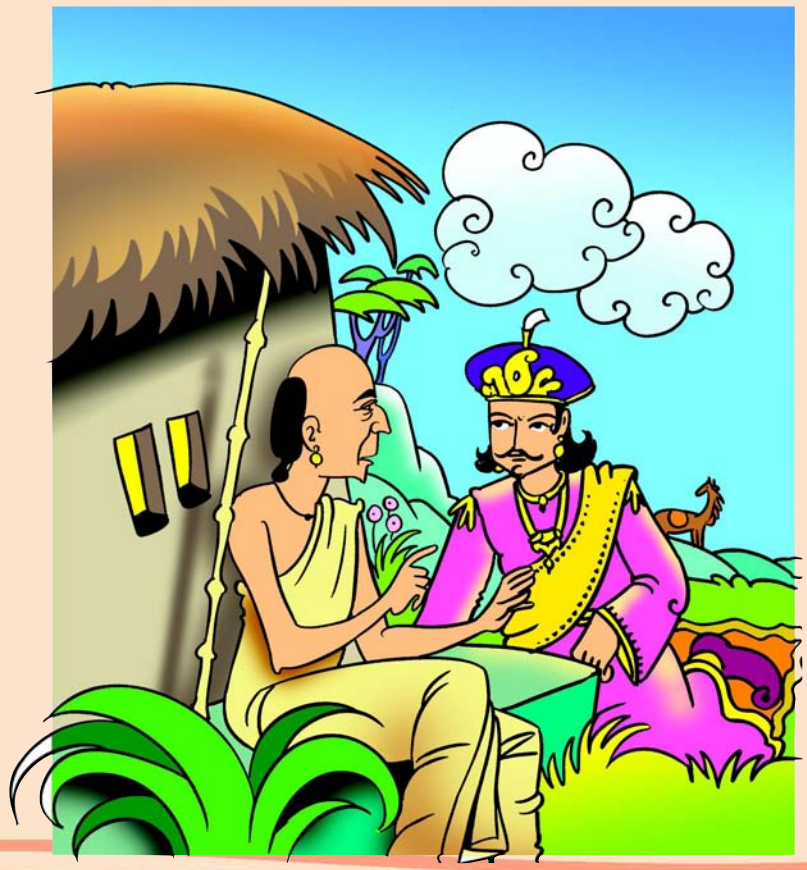
"Destruction! You stupid bird, do you call progress some destruction? You know how prosperous Nidhi has become after my plan was implemented?" shouted Lobh.

"But sir, suppose we lose Sundara, where will we get our water from?"

"Don't worry. We'll construct an artificial fresh water lake," Lobh declared. Within days a fresh water lake was constructed.

After getting Koyal's message, Sundara felt hurt. She went back to her source in the mountains. Megh, the king of monsoon clouds who was Sundara's friend, came to know about King Veer Singh's betrayal of Nidhi and decided to teach him a lesson. That year the monsoon clouds stayed away and Nidhi started reeling under a severe drought. Next year, too, there was no rain. The artificial lake also dried up. Tourists stopped coming and Lobh suddenly decided to return to Paschim. Poor Veer did not know what to do!

There was a very old man in his kingdom. People called him Acharya. He lived alone in a hut on top of a hill. One day, the king went to him for advice. The wise man said, "Veer Singh, there's only one way to end this crisis. Go to the Airawat mountain, the source of river Sundara, and pray for her forgiveness."



The king sat in prayer on Airawat. "O Sundara! Please forgive me. I made a mistake by forsaking my father's legacy. I've now realised that nature's bounty alone is the true wealth," the king said. Tears of repentance flowed from his eyes.

Sundara was a kind and gentle river. She once again started flowing down Airawat, across the valleys and finally to the plains. Men, women and children were overjoyed. With Sundara back, Megh returned with his band of clouds and they blessed Nidhi with copious rains. King Veer Singh organised a plantation drive when thousands of saplings were planted. He chose plants which grew fast. In a year or two, Nidhi had once again become green. The king closed down the zoos and released the birds and animals into the forests. Soon they were back at the river bed to chat with Sundara.She was now happy. Its waters were once again clear and clean. Nidhi was now a lovely green, and Nature was again the island's wealth.

- Ramendra Kumar

LAUGH TILL YOU DROP!



Laughter rises out of tragedy, when you need it the most, and rewards you for your courage.

- Erma Bombeck



Driver to his friend: I was getting Rs 1,000/- a week, and the boss just doubled my salary.
Friend: Yeah? What are you getting now?
Driver: Rs 1,000/- every two weeks.
Friend: ?!?!



The two pickpockets were discussing business. "Say, where did you get that lovely watch?"
"From my cousin."
"From which cousin?"
"How would I know? I found the watch and in the cover it said, 'In memory of your grateful cousin.' "

Rahul: That hat makes you look ten years younger. How old are you?
Ranjit: Twenty-nine
Rahul: I mean without the hat.





The teacher put two baskets of treats on her desk, a basket of apples and a basket of cookies. She told the students each to take only one treat.
Next to the basket of apples was a sign: *Take only one, God is watching.* As one little boy reached over for a cookie, the boy next to him said, "Take all you want, God's watching only the apples!"

DUSHTU DATTU





FROM BENGAL

THE TALE OF TWO SISTERS

A brahmin once abandoned his two little daughters in the forest. Reason: they ate two *peedhas* which he wanted to eat himself. There was nothing strange about this, because he had an insatiable hunger.

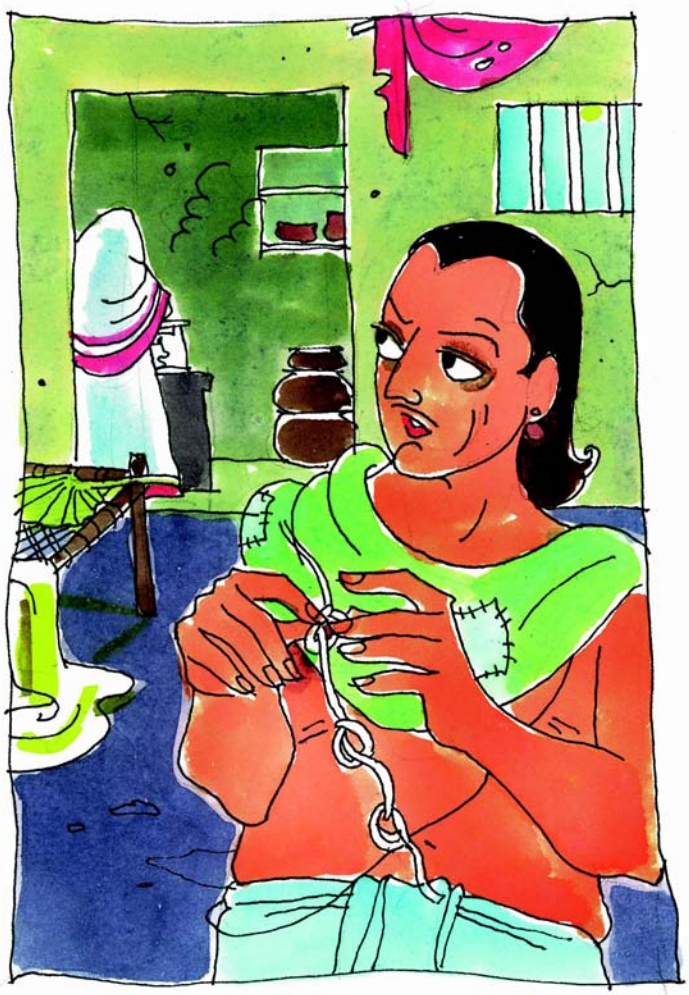
It all happened this way. This brahmin of Durgapur lived with his wife and two daughters–Umabi and Jumabi. There was hardly a day when all four of them ate a full meal. The family was so steeped in poverty. He would also not go for any work. He would not demean himself by begging for alms. He would be happy if he could scrounge off a handful of rice and pulses. Many a time the pujari of the nearby temple obliged him.

One day, what he got was some rice powder and coconut gratings. His wife told him she would cook *peedhas* (something like the *dosa* of south India). She made the batter and began to spread it on the saucepan after sprinkling it with oil. When the brahmin heard the saucepan saying sh-sh, he went into the kitchen with a thread in hand. He tied one knot. The saucepan cried sh-sh. A second knot was tied on the thread. When he saw his wife washing the vessel in which she had kept the batter, he knew that there were no more *peedhas* to be made. He then went for his bath.

On returning from the well, he sat down. "Come on, now you serve," he commanded to his wife. He ate one *peedha* and untied one knot. He ate a second *peedha* and loosened one more knot. This exercise went on till the woman said, "That's all. There are no more *peedhas*."

The brahmin found there were two more knots remaining on the thread. "No! There should have been two more!" he shouted at his wife.

"Yes, there were another two," confirmed his wife, though she wondered how on earth her husband had kept a count of the *peedhas* she had made. "But... but..." she



fumbled for an explanation.

"What happened to the two *peedhas*? I wanted to eat all of them!" he said, staring at her face. "You ate them, didn't you?"

"No, no! I didn't eat them. The girls were feeling hungry, so I gave the *peedhas* to them," she replied and busied herself re-arranging the vessels.

The brahmin felt sorry that his wife had to go hungry, but he had already decided that he would punish the children. He then went to bed.



Next morning, he woke up the girls. “How would you like a visit to your uncle's house? Get ready, quick."

Father and daughters started, after an affectionate farewell from their mother. They walked and walked and reached a dense forest. The girls wanted to rest for a while. They lay down beneath a shaded banyan. When he saw them sound asleep, the brahmin placed some stones like a pillow, mixed *sindoor* powder in water and sprinkled it around the stone pillow and then left the place quietly.

It had already become dark by the time Umabi and Jumabi woke up. They missed their father. They saw something blood-red near the stones on which he might have rested his head. They were now scared. "Father might have been killed by some wild animals!" said Jumabi. "What shall we do now, sister?"

"But this is not blood, Jumabi," remarked Umabi. "I'm afraid, father has left us here and gone away. We'll have to spend the night in this forest till sunrise."

The sisters huddled together till they saw the first rays of the sun. Then they started walking. They did not know for how long they walked. But they heaved a sigh of relief when they reached a village. They found the streets decorated and the porches of houses well swept, sprinkled with water, and decorated with floral patterns.

They saw an old woman coming out of her house. “Is anybody getting married here?" asked Umabi.

"No, my child," replied the woman, "these are puja days."

"But, grandma, Durga puja was over long ago," Umabi reminded her.

"It must then be Diwali time," said Jumabi.

"No, my little ones," said the old woman," Diwali is also over. We're celebrating the Sun festival. We worship Surya to bring us health and prosperity. Now tell me, who are you? And why are you here all alone?"

"We are from Durgapur and our father was taking us to our uncle's place. On the way, we all felt sleepy and lay down beneath a banyan tree. When we woke up in the night, we could not find him anywhere. Grandma we don't know how we would go back to Durgapur," explained Umabi.

"Don't worry. You can stay with me for the time being. I'm alone," said the old woman to console them. "You both go and take a bath in the pond. Afterwards you must worship the Sun god."

She gave them some clothes and they went to the pond. The girls had the shock of their life. When they had hardly stepped into the pond, the water disappeared! They found themselves standing on a patch of dry land.

They went back to the old woman and told her of the strange happening. "It's a special kind of pond. Here take this dry grass and throw it into the pond. You'll find the water rising."

The girls took the sacred grass and threw it into the pond. Lo and behold, water began rising. The sun appeared bright and Umabi and Jumabi thought that the god was happy with them. In no time, the pond was full of water, and they had a good bath. After putting on fresh clothes, they went back to the old woman. She asked them first to put rangoli in front of the house. When the

girls were through with that task, they were asked to prepare offerings to the Sun god. They turned their faces to the east and remained in worship for some time. They were then given rice and fruits. They forgot their hunger.

During their stay with the old woman, they made friends with the other villagers who also sometimes shared their food with them. One day, the prince of the kingdom and the son of the prime minister happened to come that way. They were thirsty and hungry after a hunting spree. They had seen the girls and so stopped by to ask for water to drink. Having refreshed themselves, they readily accepted an invitation by Umabi to come in and enjoy some food.

The two young men found the girls very courteous and social. They told the young men that their grandmother was away collecting firewood. They requested them to stay back till she returned, but they told the girls that they had set out early morning and it was time they went back to the palace. Only then Umabi and Jumabi were aware who their young guests were. They went about excited and anxiously waited for the old woman to come back to share the news with her.

The prince and his companion never visited their new acquaintances again, but messengers from the palace came and met the old woman with proposals of marriage. She felt elated. The girls were almost orphans and she was not related to them. But suddenly she had become an important member of the family. She consulted the girls. Weren't they exulted? Their only sorrow was that they would have to leave the old woman. They would certainly miss her and the other villagers who had looked after them.

Umabi was so excited that she wanted a chariot to take her to the palace for the wedding. After all, wasn't she to wed the prince of the land? Jumabi went in a palanquin in which she did not forget to take her puja vessels, for, she wished to continue her worship of the Sun god even if she were to lead a comfortable life in the house of the prime minister.

As Umabi had failed to worship the Sun god before she started for the palace, her journey was not smooth. There was a heavy downpour and the chariot had to stop at several places, so much so her arrival at the palace was greatly delayed. However, the marriage rites were performed, though the exchange of garlands could not take place during the auspicious hour. The prince's mother, the queen, thought it was a bad omen for the kingdom. Under her influence, the prince too did not shower his affection on his bride.

At the prime minister's residence, the wedding was a grand affair. At Jumabi's instance, her husband sent sweetmeat and other delicacies to her village. The old woman and the other villagers were surprised that no sweetmeat had come from the palace, and they soon forgot Umabi.

When, even after one year, Umabi did not bear a child, the queen suggested to the prince that he should send her back to the village. He was not quite willing to do that, so he discussed it with his friend, the prime minister's son. He, in turn, consulted his wife, Jumabi, who told him that, as she was expecting a baby, he should



bring Umabi so that she could be of help to her after the birth of her baby. Thus, Umabi found herself once again with her sister.

They often recalled how they found themselves abandoned in a forest and how they grew up in a village. Both Umabi and Jumabi now worshipped the Sun god in earnestness. Soon a baby boy was born to Jumabi and there were festivities in the prime minister's residence. His son invited his friend, the prince, to join the celebrations.

At the prime minister's residence, the prince saw his wife, Umabi, and he was taken over by remorse. Then and there he decided to take Umabi back to the palace. The ananouncement met with great rejoice in the prime minister's residence.

When the prince entered the palace with Umabi, both the king and queen received her with great affection, as by then they had started missing her. The queen regretted that she had advised her son to send her out of the palace. Umabi realised that the change of heart in the queen was because she was worshipping the Sun god when she was with Jumabi.



EXPERT DIRECTIONS!

Rahul's birthday was approaching. Although his parents were tired out after the strain of having shifted house recently, they agreed to host the usual birthday party. Rahul was determined to invite great-uncle Alok – a distant relative, but much valued by Rahul for his generosity.

As soon as the party was confirmed, the first thing Rahul did was to ring up great-uncle Alok and invite him. "You'll surely come, won't you?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, my child," said great-uncle, flattered by the youngster's concern. "But I don't know the way to your new house!"



"Oh, that's no problem; I'll give you the directions. You turn to Ashok Desai Road, take the left turn beside the supermarket, and walk straight along the lane. Just before the lane branches off, you'll see a red house with a green gate on the right. The gate will be open. Just walk in and ring the doorbell with your elbow. Is it clear?"

"Your directions are very clear, son! But why should I ring the bell with my elbow?" enquired great-uncle Alok, bemused. "Because your hands are sure to be full of birthday presents for me!" came the cheeky reply.

SAGA OF THE QUEEN OF THE AIR

ADVENTURE & EXPLORATION

One fine morning about a hundred years ago, two little girls went on a joyride in an aeroplane. It was a thrilling experience! The elder of the two dreamed of one day flying a plane of her own. She was an active and rebellious young girl. After graduating from a university, she worked as secretary in a British firm. Her childhood dream never waned and flying became her passionate hobby. She joined a flying club where she learned to fly, navigate and repair engines–a very unusual choice for a girl of her times. Before long, her hobby became the preoccupation of her life. Not only was she aiming to make a career in flying, but to do what no woman had ever yet accomplished and tread the field till then dominated by men. Who was this challenging young adventurer?

She was none other than Amy Johnson, born on July 1, 1903 in Hull, Yorkshire, England. Her father was a prosperous fish merchant and she was the eldest of his three daughters. She gained much experience and developed self-confidence during her stint in the London Aeroplane Club. In those days, resistance to women in aviation was fierce. Despite being told after her first lesson that she would "never make a flier", she persevered with dogged determination.



Soon she obtained the necessary licenses and navigation certificates and also became a thoroughly qualified mechanic. She was the first woman in her country to get a ground engineer's license. This was no mean feat for a young lady of her times. But she never forgot the experience of her first joyride with her sister when they were little girls. Now she had a burning ambition and aimed high, to make pioneering long distance flights, and she dreamed of flying from England to faraway Australia.

With the help of her family, who always backed her, and that of a kind rich businessman, she finally got a small light aircraft for her epic flight. It was a two year old De Havilland Gypsy Moth with extra fuel tanks. She got her machine painted in her favourite colour, bottle green, and named it Jason. She wore a green helmet and flying suit, and to her amusement, her superstitious friends found the colour unlucky. Charles Lindbergh had already made the first solo Atlantic crossing and Captain Bert Hinkler had flown from Britain to Australia setting a record. Now will she be able to fulfil her dream in her fragile little plane? In fact, everyone doubted whether this petite young woman with fair hair and blue eyes will be able to withstand the rigours of the journey. It looked impossible.

At daybreak on May 5, 1930 Amy Johnson took off from the Croydon Airport. She had to fly around

11,000 staggering miles across unfamiliar and dangerous territories. She had never flown more than 200 miles at a stretch. Only few people, and among them her father, were present to wish her good luck. Will this brave young woman succeed in her daring endeavour?

Through the morning mist she flew in her little aeroplane to Vienna and then to Constantinople, covering almost 1,600 miles. The world began to take notice of this lone girl flyer and was impressed by her courage and ability. Amy continued to press on with as much speed as possible.

So far everything was going according to plan. But on the fourth day, as she was crossing the desert before Baghdad, her little craft was caught in a blinding sandstorm. She had to make a forced landing. It was the most forsaken of all places and she dreaded it. Now there loomed the danger of the terrific force of this sand-laden gale toppling her light-weight machine and burying its nose in the ground. Quickly pushing her way out of the cockpit Amy piled all her luggage against the wheels to make the craft more stable. She took out her revolver and held it ready, in case some unfriendly natives suddenly turned up in this desolate place. Then with a prayer on her lips she waited for the storm to die down. Fortunately the storm died down and she was soon airborne again winging her way towards the great city.

From Baghdad she reached Calcutta via Karachi and Allahabad. She was indeed challenging Bert Hinkler's record and was ahead of him by two days and had already flown about 7,000 miles. This girl-wonder at once caught the world's imagination and it watched her progress with bated breath. Will she be able to reach her destination and also beat the record? She was feeling quite exhausted and knew that ahead lay more difficult and hazardous terrains.

As she flew over a massive mountain range on her way to Rangoon, in Burma (now Yangon and Myanmar), her little Jason was thrown about in the air by strong winds and lashing rain. She climbed to an altitude of 12,000 ft to avoid the storm and met with bad visibility. Then, when she dropped to almost 150 ft she could faintly discern a pair of railway tracks. She closely followed them and soon reached her destination. In torrential downpour, fading light and fuel fast running out, brave little Amy managed to bring down her little aircraft with great skill and accuracy between the two goal posts of a playing field. Unfortunately the plane wobbled on the unknown ground, finally ending up in a ditch with considerable damage.

It took her almost two days to get the plane airborne with some willing local hands working hard day and night. Then finally she flew once again after losing much precious time. An excited world still followed her trail and everyone on her route encouraged her and was too eager to give her all assistance towards her success. Once again she battled rain and storm and fog and mist, often flying blind over mountain ranges and dense jungles. Amy Johnson was in constant danger. But she bravely pressed on skilfully guiding her plane through the only safe pass through the high mountains with good visibility and landed in Bangkok.

She was now cruising almost neck to neck with the timing of Bert Hinkler. In spite of her extreme physical exhaustion, her will and determination remained unshakable. She continued on her daring flight. When she reached Singapore she had already dropped behind Hinkler's time due to inclement weather. But she did not mind at all. Her aim was to complete the great journey. She now entered the most dangerous leg across the stormy East Indies and hours of lonely flight over the treacherous Timor Sea with its extreme tropical weather. Here a failure of the engine would mean very meagre chance of survival. Unfortunately, her little Jason was not running smoothly and had developed some minor engine problems. Indeed, great risk lay ahead. But that did not discourage her and she pressed on.

One afternoon the plane suddenly disappeared and nothing more was heard or seen of it for the rest of the day. Night fell and there was still no news. People all over the world grew anxious. They feared that this young brave adventurer had ultimately fallen a prey to the

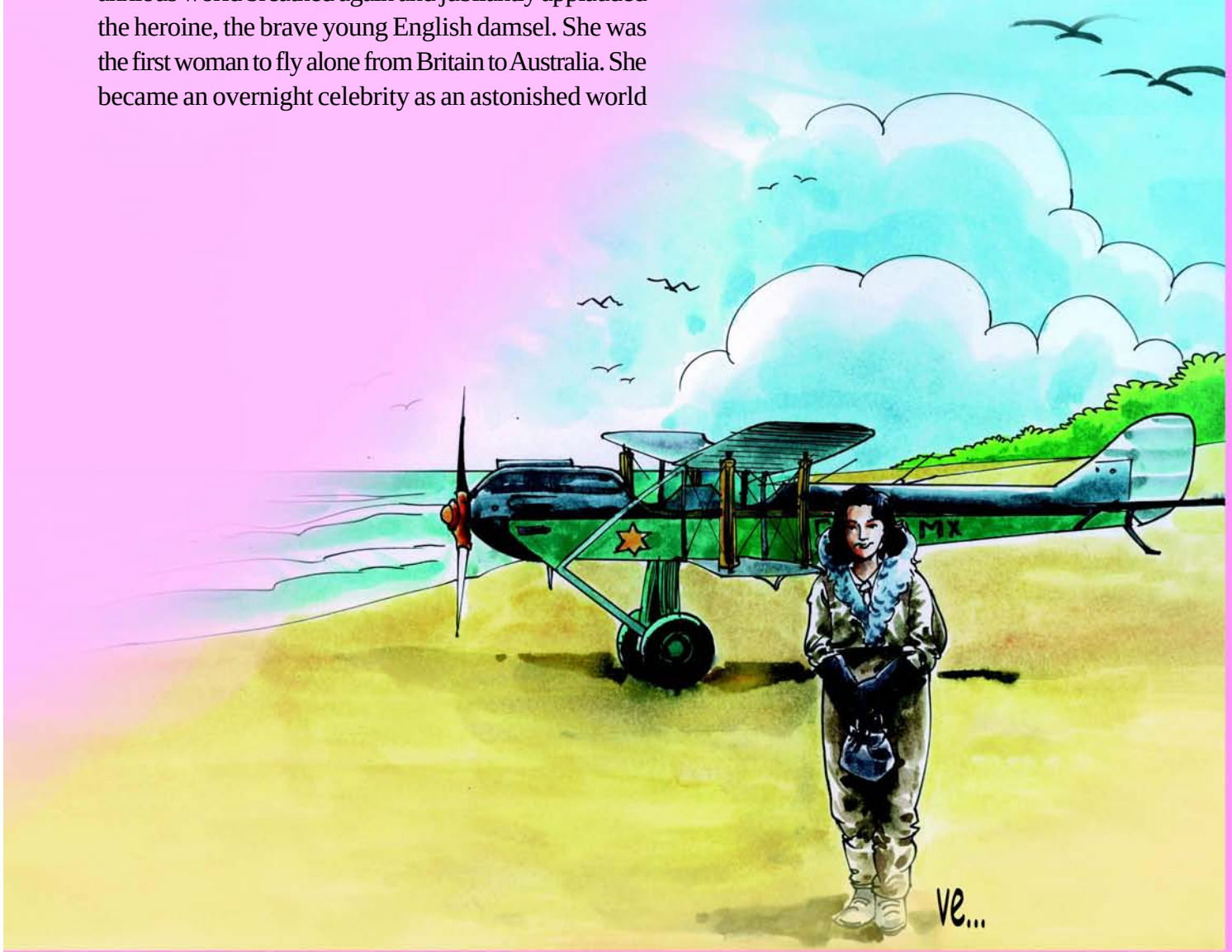
forces of nature, the forces she had so courageously challenged till then. The following morning the happy news came that she had managed to land in a remote island village.

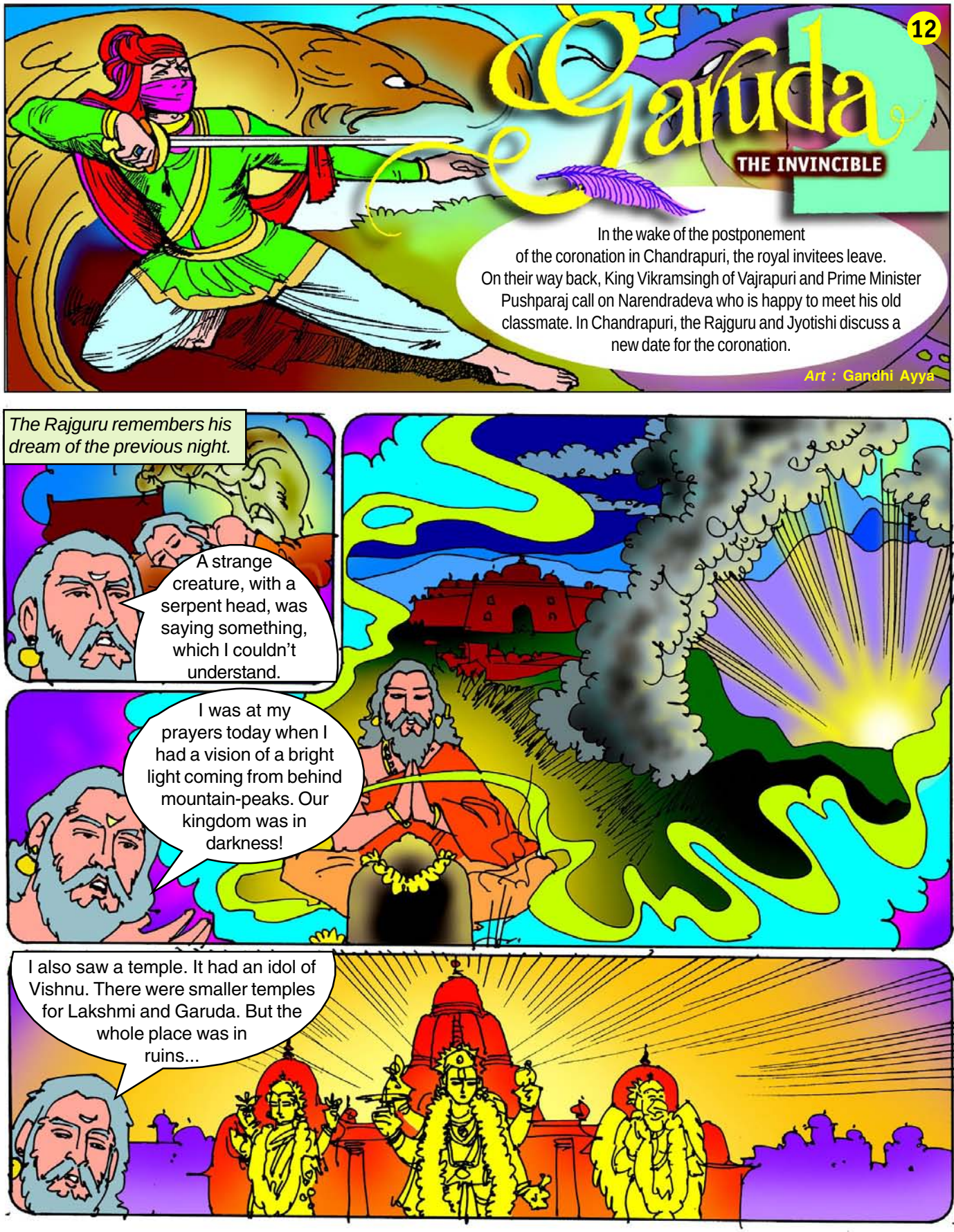
Many thought that she would now give up the attempt. But Amy Johnson felt otherwise. She was determined to carry on across the dangerous sea. Her predecessor, Bert Hinkler, had a rubber boat attached to the back of his machine. But she had none and must entirely depend on her little aircraft, Jason, and her ability to keep it afloat in the air above the deadly shark-infested waves, if situation so demanded.

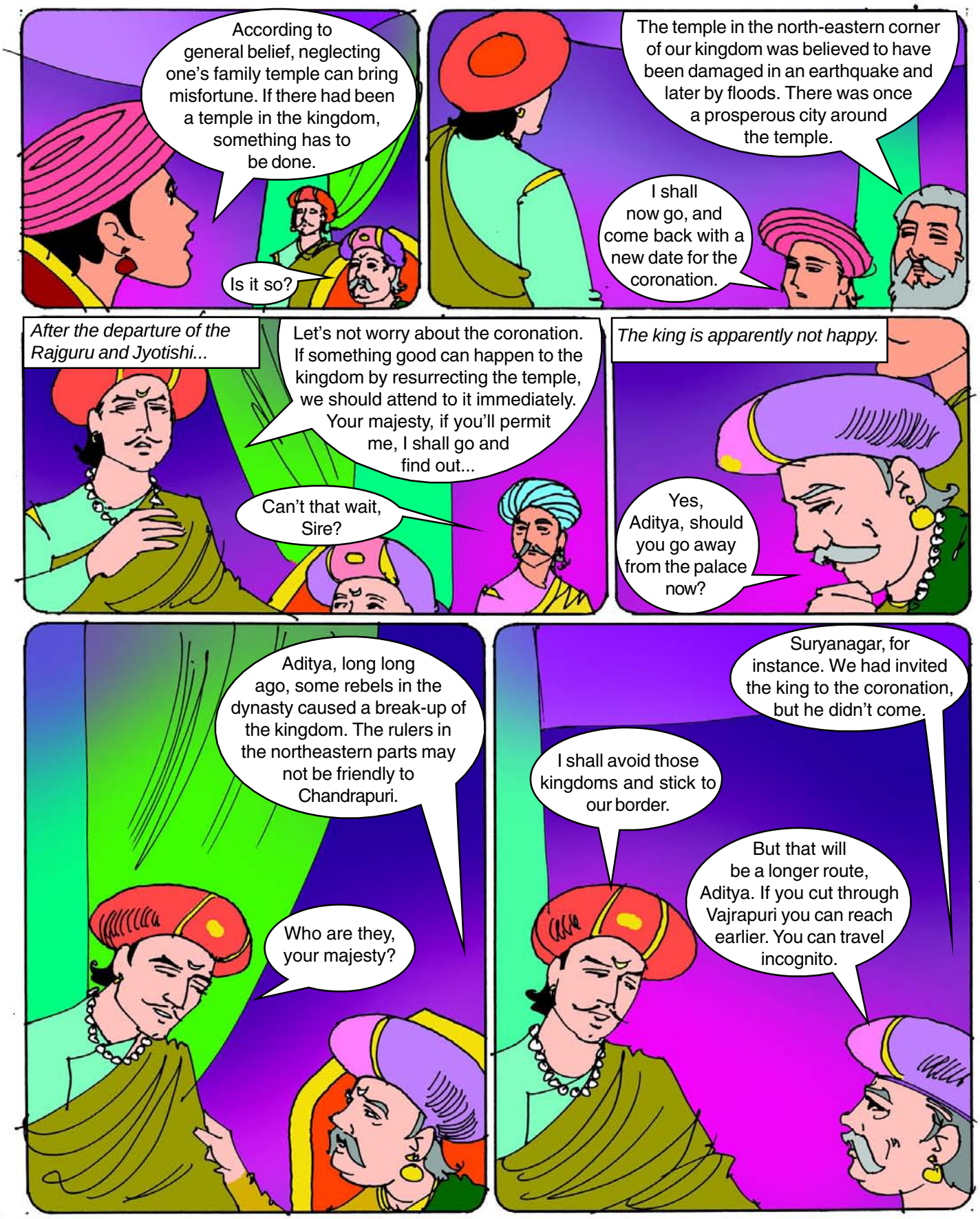
Finally on May 24, 1930 she reached her destination, Port Darwin, in Australia to a tumultuous reception. The anxious world breathed again and jubilantly applauded the heroine, the brave young English damsel. She was the first woman to fly alone from Britain to Australia. She became an overnight celebrity as an astonished world looked with wonder at her accomplishment. She was called the "Queen of the Air".

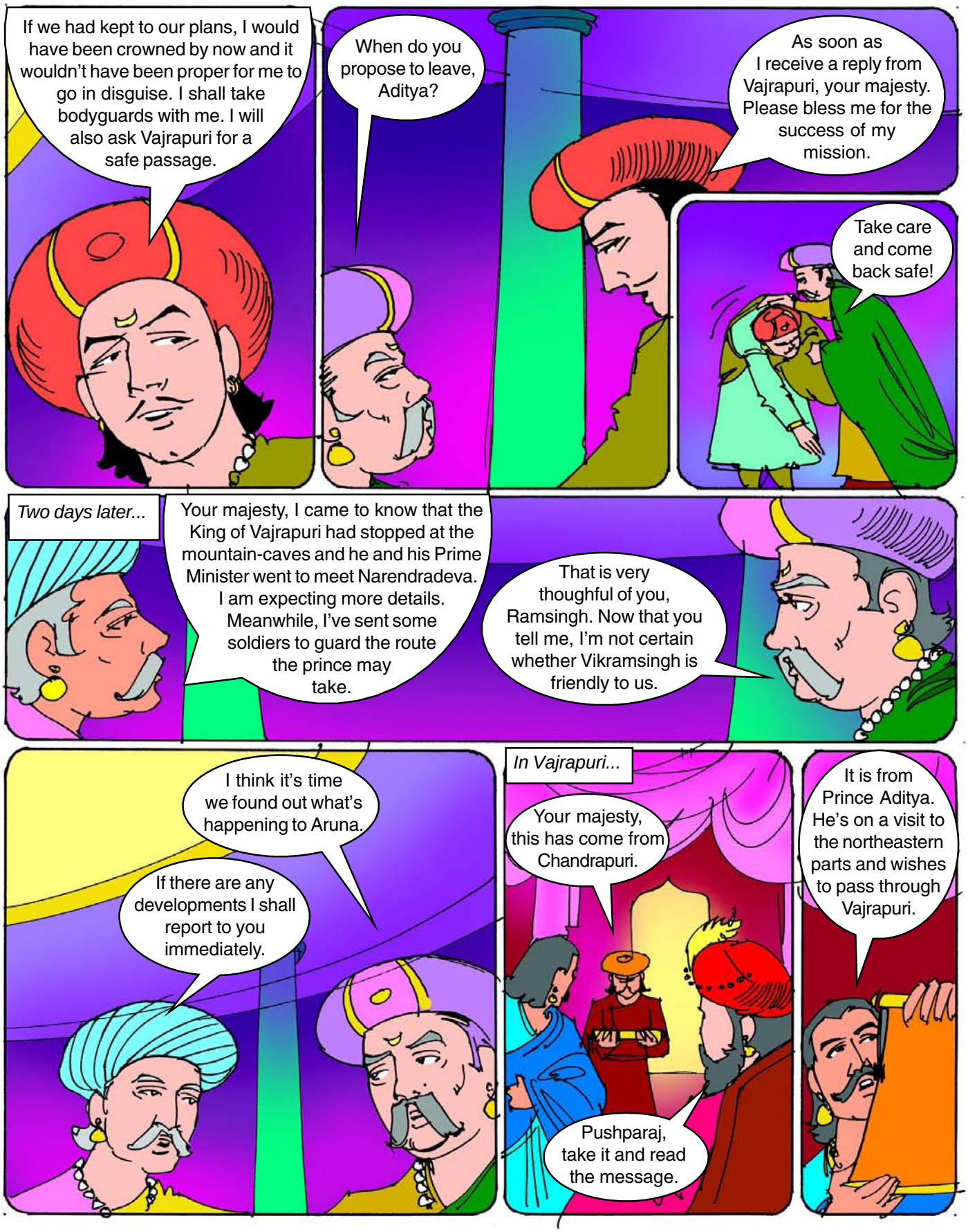
Overwhelmed by the welcome by an enormous crowd and adulation, she seems to have remarked, "I'm afraid I didn't break the record, but you don't seem to mind that – it's jolly sporting of you."

Later, she established many long distance flight records and was showered with honours and awards. At the outbreak of World War II, she joined the Air Transport Auxiliary. Her duty was to ferry aircraft from the factory depot to air force bases. During one of these routine flights in 1941, her plane was caught in stormy weather and crashed into the Thames Estuary. She was never heard of again. ***(AKD)***




12
Garuda
THE INVINCIBLE
In the wake of the postponement of the coronation in Chandrapuri, the royal invitees leave. On their way back, King Vikramsingh of Vajrapuri and Prime Minister Pushparaj call on Narendradeva who is happy to meet his old classmate. In Chandrapuri, the Rajguru and Jyotishi discuss a new date for the coronation.
Art : Gandhi Ayya
The Rajguru remembers his dream of the previous night.
A strange creature, with a serpent head, was saying something, which I couldn't understand.
I was at my prayers today when I had a vision of a bright light coming from behind mountain-peaks. Our kingdom was in darkness!
I also saw a temple. It had an idol of Vishnu. There were smaller temples for Lakshmi and Garuda. But the whole place was in ruins...


According to general belief, neglecting one's family temple can bring misfortune. If there had been a temple in the kingdom, something has to be done.
Is it so?
The temple in the north-eastern corner of our kingdom was believed to have been damaged in an earthquake and later by floods. There was once a prosperous city around the temple.
I shall now go, and come back with a new date for the coronation.
After the departure of the Rajguru and Jyotishi...
Let's not worry about the coronation. If something good can happen to the kingdom by resurrecting the temple, we should attend to it immediately. Your majesty, if you'll permit me, I shall go and find out...
Can't that wait, Sire?
The king is apparently not happy.
Yes, Aditya, should you go away from the palace now?
Aditya, long long ago, some rebels in the dynasty caused a break-up of the kingdom. The rulers in the northeastern parts may not be friendly to Chandrapuri.
Who are they, your majesty?
Suryanagar, for instance. We had invited the king to the coronation, but he didn't come.
I shall avoid those kingdoms and stick to our border.
But that will be a longer route, Aditya. If you cut through Vajrapuri you can reach earlier. You can travel incognito.


If we had kept to our plans, I would have been crowned by now and it wouldn't have been proper for me to go in disguise. I shall take bodyguards with me. I will also ask Vajrapuri for a safe passage.
When do you propose to leave, Aditya?
As soon as I receive a reply from Vajrapuri, your majesty. Please bless me for the success of my mission.
Take care and come back safe!
Two days later...
Your majesty, I came to know that the King of Vajrapuri had stopped at the mountain-caves and he and his Prime Minister went to meet Narendradeva. I am expecting more details. Meanwhile, I've sent some soldiers to guard the route the prince may take.
That is very thoughful of you, Ramsingh. Now that you tell me, I'm not certain whether Vikramsingh is friendly to us.
I think it's time we found out what's happening to Aruna.
If there are any developments I shall report to you immediately.
In Vajrapuri...
Your majesty, this has come from Chandrapuri.
Pushparaj, take it and read the message.
It is from Prince Aditya. He's on a visit to the northeastern parts and wishes to pass through Vajrapuri.

I wonder why this sudden interest in the north-east. When is he coming?

He plans arriving tomorrow. Shall we ask him to stay for a day?

We must extend all courtesies. We'll give him a banquet.

I shall send word that he's most welcome.

The next day, Aditya is ceremoniously led to Vikramsingh.

You're welcome to Vajrapuri, Prince Aditya. You must stay here for a day.

Thank you, your majesty. It was unfortunate that you had to leave Chandrapuri suddenly.

That gave me time to call on my friend, Narendradeva. Till your king told me, I didn't know he had met with an accident.

Yes. We heard he was attacked by crocodiles, but had escaped.

Lucky, he survived. Tell me, what is taking you to the north-east?

There was a Vishnu temple which was affected by an earthquake and floods. My king wishes that the temple is renovated, so that I can offer worship after my coronation. That was the tradition with the royal dynasty.

That's only very proper. Tomorrow, my soldiers will escort you to the border.

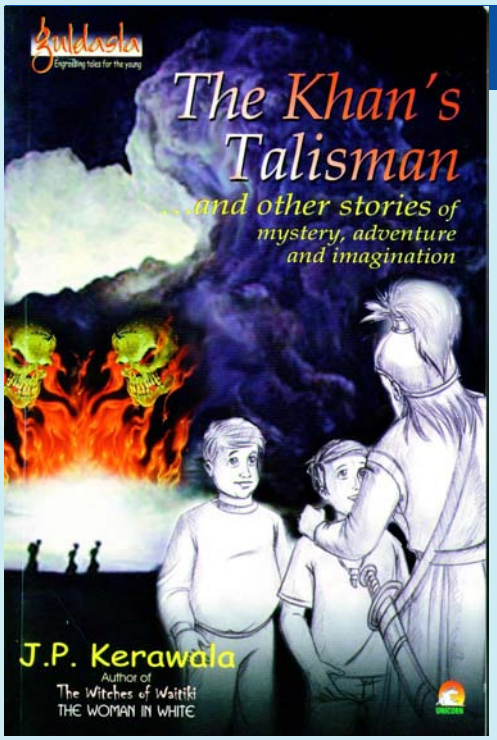
I'm beholden to you, your majesty.

Pushparaj beckons a bodyguard.

Take Prince Aditya to our guest apartments and look after to his comforts.

Yes, sir.

To continue



BOOK REVIEW

A GRIPPING READ

The Khan's Talisman...and other stories, by J. P. Kerawala, illustrations by Sonal Goyal and Sumit Sakhuja, Unicorn Books, New Delhi,

A 15-year-old bully gets the lesson of a lifetime when his younger cousin lures him into a magic cabin that takes the duo backwards into space and time – into 12th century Mongolia, at the time of Genghiz Khan's invasion…

A little boy's prayer – that his farmer father is saved from a rapacious money-lender's clutches – is answered miraculously, as four city boys swing into a rescue act after hatching a most ingenious plan…

Disgusted with his lazy, quarrelsome sons, a rich landowner, Raghunathan, leaves them a cryptic riddle, which they must decipher in order to claim his legacy. When the sons give up in frustration, it is left to the intelligent Sonu, a friend of the late Raghunathan's grandson, to take up where they left off…

Four dogs play Cupid and by their almost-human intelligence and perseverance, defeat nefarious forces bent on sabotaging a budding romance …

When small, but valuable things in Priyanka's household start vanishing, only to reappear mysteriously elsewhere, her parents ascribe it to 'Little Pinku', the mischievous poltergeist whom they apparently inherited with the house. However, Priyanka's friend Karishma, who somehow cannot digest this story, sets out to find the real culprit and vindicate the poltergeist…

The five fast-paced, action-packed stories, set in various locales as diverse as Pune and Pudukkottai, reveal the author's vivid imagination and descriptive powers. However, the book could have done with tighter editing in some places – an example being the long-winded introduction of the story, *The Power of a Prayer*. Also, the grisly content and language of two of the stories make the book unsuitable for very young readers. The first story, *The Khan's Talisman*, in particular, has a couple of episodes of beheading and butchering which, while making an exciting read for a teenager or young adult, would probably be too gruesome for the under-tens.

The stories are garnished with generous lashings of humour. I especially enjoyed the episode in *To Save a Poltergeist* where the gluttonous hostess, Mrs. Kukude, generously brings plates of snacks (all apparently bought from the best shops in town) for her young guests and urges them to eat, but swiftly gobbles up everything herself amid her talk, leaving not even a morsel for the guests. In an ironic touch, the guest while taking leave of Mrs. Kukude thanks her for 'all the refreshments'. The irony goes unnoticed by the lady, who contentedly goes on eating!

All told, an excellent read for teenage and older readers.

- Rajee Raman

CHANDAMAMA QUIZ-12

Co-sponsored by Infosys® FOUNDATION, Bangalore

All the questions are based on the contents of the issues of 2005.

What you should do: 1. Write down the answers; 2. Mention your name, age (you should be below 16), full postal address with PIN Code; 3. Mention your subscriber number, if you are a subscriber; 4. Write on the envelope **CHANDAMAMA QUIZ-12** with your complete address; 5. Mail your entry to reach us by **December 15, 2006**; 6. The results will be published in the January 2007 issue.

AN ALL-CORRECT ENTRY WILL FETCH A CASH PRIZE OF RS 250*

*** If there are more than one all-correct entry, a lot will be taken to decide the prizewinner. However, the names of all those who have sent all-correct entries will be published.**

1. **Which bird has the longest life span?**
2. **Which is the only place where one can see sunrise on the Pacific Ocean and sunset on the Atlantic Ocean?**
3. **"Three brave men disappeared, never to be seen again. Several expeditions were sent to trace them without success." Who were the three men? Where did they disappear?**
4. **"The only other place comparable to these marvellous regions must be space itself, out far beyond atmosphere, between stars, where sunlight has no grip on the dust and rubbish of our planetary air." Who made this remark? What is being compared to?**
5. **The Boxer Rebellion of China of 1900 is called after which Englishman?**
6. **"He returned to his father's kingdom when he was 12, and lived to be one of the greatest kings in Mewar history." Who is this prince? Where was he till he was 12 years old?**
7. **Which metal is abundant in the earth's crust?**
8. **"The investment was worth it. It revolutionised world shipping. Even today it remains a technological marvel." What is being referred to here? How much was the total investment?**
9. **Where in the USA is Main Street located? What is its attraction?**

10. Can you identify these funny-looking characters? Who are they talking to?



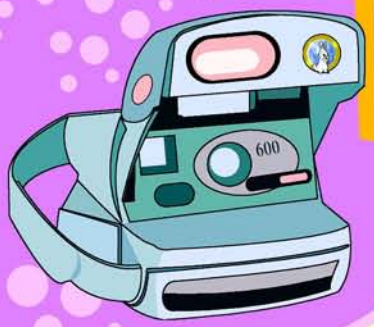


Photo Caption CONTEST



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You may write it on a post card marking it:

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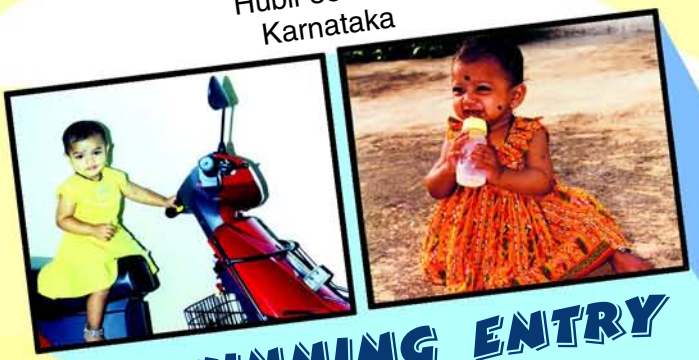


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Congratulations!

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WINNING ENTRY

"EAGER FOR A RIDE"
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HOW TO ECONOMISE GAS



Brinda was in a fix. Her gas cylinder was about to get exhausted and it might last only for another couple of days. There was a shortage of refills and she had been told by the agency not to expect a cylinder for a week. She already had the tough task of preparing food for her children, husband, and in-laws. Now, her uncle and aunt had arrived quite unexpectedly. She decided to take her aunt into confidence.

"Don't worry, Brinda!" said her aunt. "You go and relax! I shall take care of the cooking and see to it that we don't run out of gas!"

Her aunt entered the kitchen and took over full charge. That day passed off peacefully. Next day, when Brinda was expecting bad news from the kitchen, nothing of that sort happened. Unable to conceal her curiosity, Brinda went to her aunt.

"Brinda!" said her aunt. "I followed all the steps already taken by you to economise gas. Additionally, I did something you had overlooked all these days. To cater to the different needs of your family members at different times, you were cooking three or four times to prepare different types of food, needing frequent reheating. Besides, you're not using the available vessels in the kitchen. I chose the large cooker in which I could cook *khichri*, vegetables and *dal* all at the same time. Then, I put them in different casseroles which again you were not using. I could thus serve hot food. There was thus no need to reheat the food. I did the same thing in the evening. From today onwards, all of us together should eat our breakfast, lunch and dinner. We can thus manage to economise on gas."

"My god!" exclaimed Brinda. "This simple thing hadn't occurred to me earlier! Thank you, aunty! Not only for now, but in future, too, I shall plan my cooking in one stretch and see that we eat our meals together."



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